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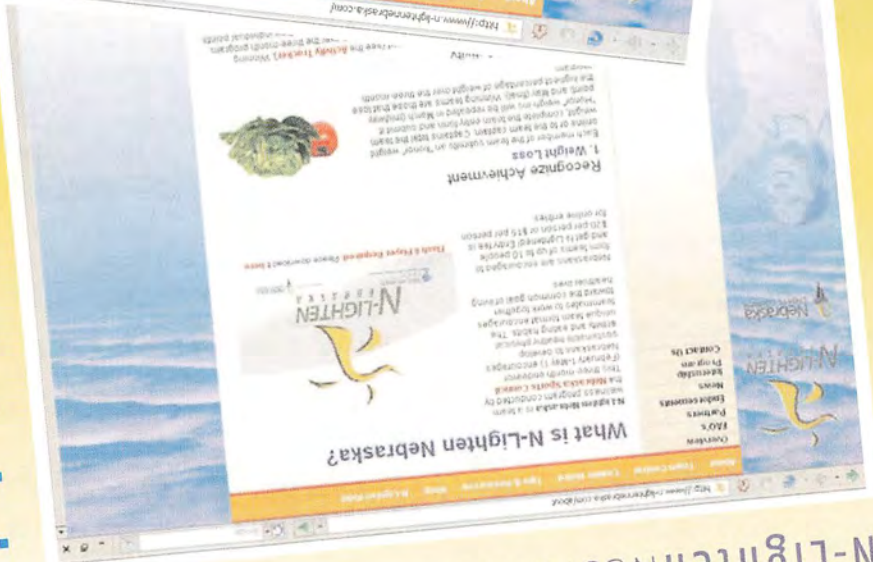
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Strange Bedfellows?

Some found it a little odd to be pulling for national champions



Brian Hill

LSU HAS PLAYED a major role in Nebraska football history.

Arguably the most famous image in NU's long and storied past shows Jerry Tagge stretching out to score the winning touchdown as Nebraska rallied from a 12-10 deficit to defeat the Tigers 17-12 on Jan. 1, 1971, giving the Huskers their first national championship.

That Orange Bowl classic was the first of six meetings between Nebraska and LSU. The Huskers are 5-0-1 against the Tigers, including four bowl victories, the most recent in the Jan. 1, 1987, Sugar Bowl.

Thirty-seven years and six days after that first meeting in Miami, Nebraska fans were in the strange position of being LSU fans for a night. One poster on our Web site message board admitted feeling "kind of dirty" to be cheering for the team from Baton Rouge, La.

But it had to be done.

Bo Pelini, who was 3 years old when the Huskers first defeated LSU, was back on the Tiger sideline for one last blast as defensive coordinator, before moving on to his new gig at Nebraska. Pelini, three weeks after his 40th birthday, returned to coach in the BCS Championship Game, with the blessing of athletic director Tom Osborne, a 33-year-old assistant under Bob Devaney when the Huskers won their first title.

Although many worried that a bad performance by the LSU defense would reflect negatively on Nebraska, it turned

out to be a big positive when the Tigers rallied from a 10-0 deficit to dominate Pelini's alma mater Ohio State and take their third national championship with a 38-24 victory.

Earlier in that day, the multi-tasking Pelini had officially filled the last spot on his Nebraska staff with the hiring of Kansas assistant Tim Beck as running backs coach. You can read more about Pelini and the mostly familiar faces on his coaching staff in this edition of Huskers Illustrated.

As Nebraska fans await the spring debut of Pelini and company, Husker basketball continues to pick up steam.



The NU men finished their nonconference schedule 11-2, including a classic 88-79 upset of No. 16 Oregon at the Qwest Center Omaha. The women took an 11-3 mark into their Big 12 Conference opener and pulled off an upset of their own, knocking off No. 15 Texas 56-45 as this edition was going to press. You'll find more on both teams in this month's issue.

Speaking of Texas, two of Nebraska's last three

football commitments come from the Lone Star State as the new staff works to rebuild the 2008 recruiting class, which suffered a number of defections during the coaching change.

The Texas recruiting effort should get an additional boost with the hiring of Beck, who was one of the most respected high school coaches in that state before moving on to the college ranks.

It was surprising to some that Beck would move from Kansas, which just completed a historic 12-1 season, but his high regard for Nebraska and his ties to fellow Youngstown, Ohio, natives Bo and Carl Pelini won out.

"As a kid growing up, you see programs like Nebraska, and you say, 'Man, that's the epitome of college football,'" Beck told the Lincoln Journal Star. "To be around people like Tom Osborne and the traditions — it's a great opportunity." ■

ON THE COVER

Senior center Aleks Maric and the NU men's basketball team finished the nonconference 11-2, while sophomore guard Yvonne Turner and the women entered Big 12 play with an 11-3 mark. Cover photos, design by Scott Bruhn.

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CONTENTS

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8 FAMILIAR FACES

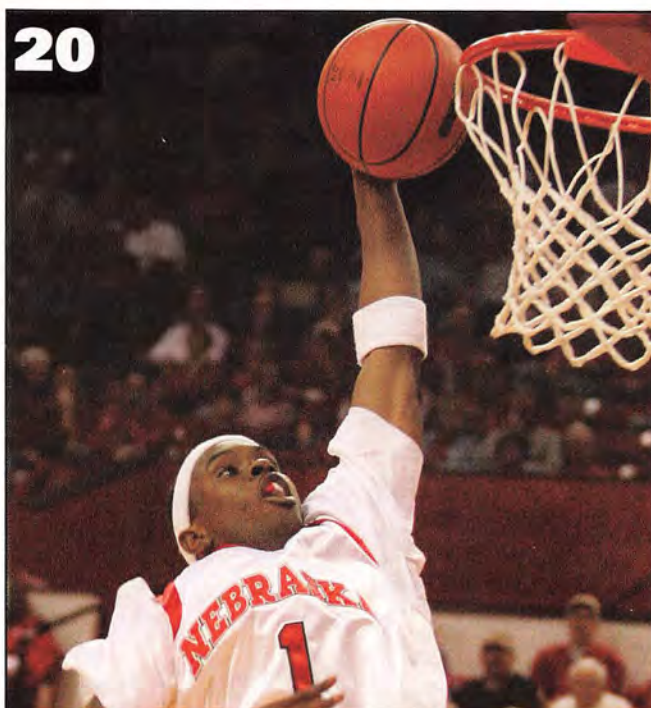
In addition to his older brother Carl (above), Bo Pelini's new Nebraska coaching staff includes several familiar names. *By Mike Babcock*

NEXT ISSUE

The March Recruiting Edition is scheduled to mail Feb. 18. Check for updates at huskersillustrated.com.

DEPARTMENTS

Letter From The Editor	4
State Of The Huskers	6
<i>Former Nebraska lineman Russ Hochstein sees similarities between his New England Patriots and the 1997 Huskers.</i>	
From The Beat	7
<i>NU baseball coach Mike Anderson seems to be embracing the sweeping changes to his program and sport.</i>	
Recruiting	16
<i>Less than a month before Signing Day, NU's 2008 class looked drastically different than it had just a few weeks earlier.</i>	
Men's Basketball	20
<i>Sophomore guard Sek Henry has learned to adjust to Nebraska's weather . . . and playing defense.</i>	
Women's Basketball	24
<i>Cory Montgomery's first organized basketball experience was, to be kind, forgettable.</i>	
10 Questions	26
<i>Ade Dagunduro has established himself as an intense, aggressive defender.</i>	
Chairmen Of The Boards/Lists	27
Volleyball	28
<i>NU's shorter outside hitters bring all-around skills.</i>	
Other Sports: Track and Field	30
<i>Robert Rands hopes to finally put the pressure aside.</i>	
Notebook	34
<i>NU's pole vaulters got a head start on their teammates.</i>	
Crossword Puzzle/Huskernutz	36
Final Word	38



Aiming Higher

Former Nebraska lineman Hochstein sees similarities between Patriots and 1997 Huskers



Terry DOUGLASS

A LITTLE MORE THAN A WEEK after helping New England become the first NFL team to finish a 16-game regular season undefeated, guard Russ Hochstein said the historic feat had already been pushed aside by the Patriots.

"It has been a very special thing, but we do downplay it because, ultimately, 16-0 doesn't get you a Super Bowl ring," said Hochstein, a Hartington native who finished his college career at Nebraska in 2000. "Our goal is much

higher than 16-0, and winning in the playoffs and winning the Super Bowl is the ultimate goal.

"We celebrated it about two or three days after the game was over, but then we got back to work and moved on. We've put it behind us and we don't even really talk about it anymore."

And so it goes with the New England Patriots. Hochstein said it's a culture created by head coach Bill Belichick that permeates an entire organization where everyone is doggedly focused on the matter at hand.

Unlike some NFL teams where star players appear to only be concerned about their individual performances, Hochstein said players in the Patriots' organization understand the importance of making sacrifices for the team. Egos are checked at the door.

Whether it's veteran stars like quarterback Tom Brady or linebacker Tedy Bruschi, the approach is the same. In New England, even players like wide receiver Randy Moss — a perennial All-Pro who previously had the reputation of being anything but a team player — seem to buy into the system.

"We've got a great core group of guys here, and at the end of the day, they don't care about what types of individual awards you win or anything like that," Hochstein said. "All they care about is what we do as a team. If you're coming here and you want to be an individual, you're probably going to have a hard time doing it because the guys around you don't want to do it that way."

"You do kind of fall in line. It's a philosophy that has been successful and it has worked, and us players are just trying to be a cog in that and help any way we can."

While pro and college football have their obvious differences, Hochstein said he can see some similarities between the 16-0 Patriots and Nebraska's 1997 national championship team that finished 13-0 when he was a redshirt freshman.

"The thing that both seasons have in common is that going undefeated is very hard to do at either level," Hochstein said. "It takes a lot of time, a lot of hard work and a lot of coming together and people doing their jobs very well, making the plays when they have to and executing at a high level."

Hochstein said the attitudes of the players on the '97 Nebraska squad were comparable to what the Patriots have now.

"All the guys really enjoy football and love to play it," Hochstein said. "When you've got guys that come to work

every day that are determined to work hard and get better practice to practice, that helps.

"You're also talking about two groups of guys that never put too much out in front of them — they were always looking at the next game or next practice and never looked beyond that. Those are some pretty good traits that both teams had."

Hochstein is in his sixth season as a pro, serving as the versatile utility man on the offensive line for the Patriots. The 6-foot-4, 305-pounder set a career-high with his eighth start in this year's regular-season finale as New England beat the New York Giants 38-35 to cap their 16-0 campaign.

"I love the game of football — it's my job and I love it," Hochstein said. "I'm very lucky, I'm very fortunate and I'm very blessed to be able to do it."

Despite all the NFL success and the Super Bowl rings, former Nebraska teammate Loran Kaiser said Hochstein hasn't changed a bit.

"He's about as much of a good ol' boy as there is," said Kaiser, a former defensive tackle for the Huskers who roomed with Hochstein in college. "He loves what he's doing, and he loves it because he loves to play football."

"That's just how he's always been. He isn't playing pro football so that he could say he did it, he just loves the game and he loves to play."

Hochstein said he's never felt the need to try and become something he's not.

"My parents always taught me that no matter what you do and what you become, you've got to remember that your family is the most important thing you have," Hochstein said. "God, family and friends — if you remember those things, then you'll be all right."

In his free time, Hochstein can often be found giving back to the community both in the Boston area and in his hometown.

"I try and help where I can, and I wish I could do more," Hochstein said. "I was very fortunate to grow up in a great community where I had a lot of people supporting me, and I still love going back and seeing them all. It's a special place."

When his playing days do finally come to an end, Hochstein said he'd love to return to Nebraska and would like to possibly do some coaching. However, his new bride of six months, Christine — a Rhode Island native — might have something to say about that.

"I loved growing up in Nebraska and hope to come back someday, but my wife is here smiling at me," Hochstein said. "So I don't know if that's going to happen or not."

Kaiser's advice to Hochstein would probably be to listen to his wife.

"Russell pretty much out-kicked his coverage, marrying her," Kaiser said. "She's a really nice girl." ■



Russ Hochstein is in his sixth season in the NFL.

Terry Douglass is the sports editor of the Grand Island (Neb.) Independent. He can be reached at terry.douglass@msn.com.

Different Strokes

Nebraska's coach seems to be embracing the sweeping changes to his program and sport



Curt McKEEVER

A NEW ERA of Nebraska baseball is starting in 2008. And while much of that is not by choice, sixth-year coach Mike Anderson seems to be embracing the sweeping changes that have hit his sport and program.

Since the 2007 Huskers bowed out in the championship round of the NCAA Regional at Arizona State last June, Anderson has been bombarded with curveball after curveball.

For starters, he lost six of seven underclassmen pitchers who were selected in the Major League Baseball amateur draft.

Then, he shook up his staff after Andy Sawyers stepped down, hiring former Dallas Baptist head coach Eric Newman to be in charge of the pitchers while assigning Dave Bingham to new duties.

Before summer ended, his program reported to the NCAA four instances of secondary violations after players inappropriately attempted to receive credit at a local sporting goods store for exchanging university-issued bats. One of the players transferred, another was placed on a medical hardship, and a third received no penalty from the NCAA.

Still, it was not the kind of distraction Anderson needed at a time when he was trying to prepare for perhaps the biggest changes that will affect 2008 — the new uniform dates for practice and competition.

This year will be the first that every Division I team begins practice on the same day (Feb. 1). Games also cannot be played before Feb. 22.

Considering what's gone on at Nebraska since June, the timing of the new rules being put into place might be perfect for the Huskers.

True, Anderson welcomes back six who were in the starting lineup at the end of 2007. But when the Huskers break camp and head to their opening series at Stanford, senior right-hander Johnny Dorn, 31-9 in his career, will be the only pitcher with any significant starting experience.

"Every year, every place I've coached, there's always guys that crawl out of the rock that you had no idea what they were going to do, and they come out and they do it," Newman said. "We're going to develop the guys who are here."

Though Dorn, left-handed junior Dan Jennings and right-handed senior Thad Weber (the only draftee to return) would appear to be early favorites for weekend starting spots, most roles are completely up for grabs. The only other experienced pitchers are third-year bullpen regulars: right-hander Erik Bird and lefty Zach Herr.

Besides Weber, who went 7-0 with a 0.78 ERA for the Beatrice Bruins last summer, Nebraska kept two of three recruits who were drafted: freshman first baseman/pitcher David Stewart of St. Louis, a 31st-round pick of Washington, and Drew Gray, a junior college All-America catcher at Longview, Mo., who was picked by Texas in the 27th round.

The Huskers lost pitching prospect Jacob Diekman of Wymore to the professional ranks and, just before the Aug. 15 deadline, Charlie Shirek opted to sign with the Chicago White Sox. Shirek had been projected to be in the weekend starting rotation.

It was no surprise, then, that Nebraska added three more pitchers before school started, then brought in Arizona State transfer Joe Hatasaki between semesters.

"The hit that our program took . . . We anticipated some of these guys signing, but that's why (our) roster size is down to what it is," said Anderson, noting the Nebraska's fall roster of 32 players was the smallest of any Big 12 Conference team.

Anderson doesn't believe moving the new professional signing deadline up a month to July would make things easier for college teams, either, since the new NCAA rule that will require transfers to sit out a year before becoming eligible will be in place by this summer.

"I don't think (Charlie Shirek) signed because there was a (new) rule, but I do think the deadline created other opportunities," Anderson said. "First of all, you lose him for the full year. And, junior college kids you're losing. There was a different environment with the (pro) signing procedure this year."

The different environment created by this year's pro signing procedure — combined with the high number of underclassmen Nebraska lost — meant Anderson had to be a lot more than business as usual while running fall practice.

"I feel very good about our freshmen, (but) it's the first time I grabbed a group of freshman (and said) 'Step up and speak up,'" he said. "We've got a good corps of older guys that I really like. But if we're going to have success, from the very beginning, our freshmen are going to have to do some things. So, yeah, it did change some of that part of it."

Should Anderson's club need to argue in May that it deserves a spot in the NCAA Tournament, it ought to be able to fall back on the schedule.

Five opponents — Arkansas, Texas, Wichita State, Texas A&M and Missouri — were No. 1 seeds in last year's field. Three others teams NU will face — Cal Riverside, Louisiana-Lafayette and Creighton — also played in the event.

"Last year was an example where playing a tough schedule paid off in getting into the NCAA Tournament," Anderson said. "Because of the tough nonconference schedule we played, and the wins against good teams outside of the Big 12, it not only helped us prepare for the conference, but helped us in the NCAA Regional."

Nebraska finished fourth in the Big 12 and had a 30-25 overall record before being picked to play in the NCAA Tournament for the eighth time in nine years. The Huskers then reached the title game of a regional for the sixth time in eight seasons. ■



Mike Anderson is entering his sixth season as head coach.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football, he is the primary beat writer for baseball. Curt can be reached at cmckeever@journalstar.com

Familiar

Faces



Carl Pelini (red jacket) talks with brother Bo during the 2003 Spring Game. Carl Pelini, then a graduate assistant, will be the defensive coordinator for his younger brother.



Shawn Watson, who will remain Nebraska's offensive coordinator, is greeted by athletic director Tom Osborne after the Texas game Oct. 27 in Austin.

'Great teachers for the young men in our program'

By Mike Babcock

Before Bo Pelini was introduced as Nebraska's head football coach, there was speculation as to whom he would hire as assistants. Marvin Sanders and Barney Cotton were mentioned prominently.

Both were on coach Frank Solich's final staff at Nebraska in 2003, along

with Pelini. And both were out of coaching last season, Sanders after three seasons as secondary coach and defensive coordinator at North Carolina, Cotton after three seasons as offensive line coach and coordinator at Iowa State.

They were readily available. And they were eager to return to Nebraska, where both played.

They also had connected with

Pelini during the 2003 season. So their hiring came as no surprise, as Pelini quickly assembled a staff. Two weeks after his introductory news conference, he announced his assistants — all but a running backs coach. He had picked a man for the job. But that man was involved in bowl preparations and wouldn't be named until after the bowl games were finished.

Turns out the man was then-Kansas assistant Tim Beck.

Sanders and Cotton weren't the only members of the Solich staff Pelini



Then offensive coordinator/offensive line coach Barney Cotton instructs quarterback Jammal Lord during the 2003 Spring Game. Cotton has returned to Nebraska as associate head coach/offensive line coach.

brought back. Ron Brown returned, as did Carl Pelini, Bo's older brother and a Nebraska grad assistant in 2003.

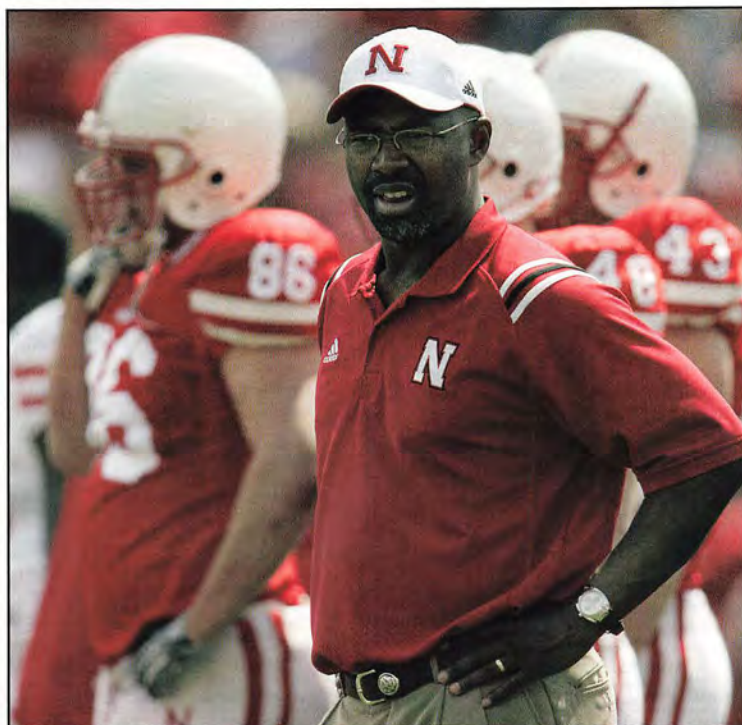
In addition, Bo Pelini brought back Jeff Jamrog to be director of football operations.

He retained two members of Bill Callahan's staff, Shawn Watson and Ted Gilmore. And he brought along two young assistants from Louisiana State, Mike Ekeler and John Papuchis.

Pelini indicated what he wanted in assistant coaches were teachers and communicators, "high-energy" people. And those qualities, which also apply to him, characterize this group. They will be "great teachers for the young men in our program," he said. "And they are a good fit for Nebraska football."

Although he plans to call the defense, "our defensive coaches will all have equal input on what we are doing, regardless of titles or positions," said Pelini.

"Our defensive coaches are outstanding teachers who will bring great energy to the practice field. I have worked with each of them during my career and have great confidence in this group. This staff plans to build on the tradition of hard-nosed Blackshirt defenses at Nebraska."



Ted Gilmore, a member of the Nebraska staff since 2005, returns as receivers coach/recruiting coordinator, with the added title of assistant head coach.



SHAWN WATSON (48)
offensive coordinator,
quarterbacks

Nebraska ranked 11th in the nation in total offense in 2007, and eighth in passing yardage, so Pelini didn't see a need for dramatic change. So he retained Watson, who served as Bill Callahan's offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, although Callahan did most of the play-calling.

"I think we can add some wrinkles to what has worked well the past few years," said Pelini.

Watson spent his first season at Nebraska coaching the tight ends, after seven seasons at Colorado, the last six as offensive coordinator. He went to Colorado from Northwestern with coach Gary Barnett. The Buffaloes won four Big 12 North Division titles during his time in Boulder.

Watson had offers from California and San Diego State when he left Colorado, but he chose to rejoin Callahan with the Cornhuskers, replacing Scott Downing. He and Callahan were assistants together at Illinois under coach Mike White from 1983 to 1985, even sharing an office there for two years.

Watson began his college playing career at Illinois before transferring to Southern Illinois, where he played safety for two seasons. He also was the head coach at Southern Illinois for three seasons.

He also coached at Miami of Ohio, working with tight ends, wide receivers and quarterbacks as well as serving as recruiting coordinator. His son Adam is a walk-on defensive back at Nebraska.



TED GILMORE (40)
ASSISTANT HEAD COACH, RECEIVERS,
RECRUITING COORDINATOR

Gilmore, the other Callahan assistant Pelini retained, has the added title of assistant head coach. Not only did he develop solid receivers for Callahan's West Coast offense, replacing Turner Gill, but he also began coordinating recruiting after Downing left to become the head coach at Northern Colorado.

"I'm a strong believer that regardless of what system you're in, it's about players," he has said.

He has Midwest roots. He is from Wichita, Kan., where he was a high school teammate of former Cornhusker Lawrence Pete. And he played two seasons at Butler County Community College in El Dorado, Kan., before transferring to Wyoming, where he earned two letters as a wide receiver.

The soft-spoken Gilmore began his coaching career at Wyoming. Since then, he has been an assistant at Kansas (1999), Houston (2000), Purdue (2001-02) and Colorado, where he worked with Watson.

Immediately after Pelini was hired, he was on the road recruiting. And Gilmore went along. "I don't know if Bo knows this, but not only was he recruiting those kids, he was recruiting me," Gilmore told the Lincoln Journal Star. "I can stand here before you and say I'm excited to be a part of it."

Downing, who recruited Gilmore to Wyoming from Butler County, told the Omaha World-Herald: "You never have to worry about him doing the right thing. He always puts the players first."



BARNEY COTTON (51)
ASSOCIATE HEAD COACH,
OFFENSIVE LINE

Cotton is a Cornhusker through and through. The Omaha native earned three letters at Nebraska (1976-78), playing in the offensive and defensive lines — he was a defensive tackle as a junior, returning to offensive guard as a senior and earning second-team All-Big Eight recognition alongside All-America left tackle Kelvin Clark. He even drove a red pick-up truck when he returned to Lincoln in 2003 to replace Milt Tenopir, his offensive line coach, and serve as offensive coordinator after Solich gave up that responsibility.

Cotton coaches physical line play as a basis for running the ball, an area that figures to be emphasized by Pelini. He played four seasons in the NFL, with the Cincinnati Bengals and St. Louis Cardinals, and began coaching in 1989 at St. Cloud State, where he was offensive line coach and coordinator.

He was the head coach at Hastings College in Nebraska for two seasons and then assistant head coach, offensive line coach and offensive coordinator at New Mexico State from 1997 through 2002.

Cotton, whose Cornhusker teammates nicknamed him "Scooby," was the offensive coordinator at Iowa State for three seasons, until coach Dan McCarney resigned after the 2006 season. "Our offensive assistants have extensive collegiate experience, specifically in the Big 12 North," Pelini said.

His respect for Cotton is reflected in the associate head coach title.



RON BROWN (51)
TIGHT ENDS

Brown needs no introduction to Cornhusker fans. He was an assistant for 17 seasons, coaching the receivers — and tight ends — for the first 16 of those seasons. His players not only caught passes but also were tenacious blockers, reflected in the fact that Nebraska led the nation in rushing nine times during his tenure.

Brown is a graduate of Brown University. He began his coaching career as defensive coordinator for the New Jersey Rams, a semi-professional team. He was the freshman coach at his alma mater in 1983 and then an assistant for three seasons before being hired to replace Gene Huey at Nebraska in 1987.

The past four years, Brown has been out of coaching. He has served as the Nebraska State Director of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, as well as a national spokesman for the FCA and a regular columnist for the FCA magazine "Sharing the Victory." He and former Cornhusker offensive lineman Stan Parker are co-founders and co-directors of Mission Nebraska, a Christian ministry.



TIM BECK (41)
RUNNING BACKS

Beck was an assistant at Kansas under Mark Mangino for three seasons. In addition to coaching receivers, he was the passing game coordinator this past season, the most successful in school history. The Jayhawks finished 12-1, with a 24-21 victory against Virginia Tech in the Orange Bowl game, ranking second in the nation in scoring offense, eighth in total offense and 17th in passing offense.

Among Beck's recruiting areas was Texas, where he was a successful high school coach, spending three seasons each at Summit High in Mansfield and R.L. Turner High in Carrollton. He was the 2003 District Coach of the Year after directing Summit to its first-ever playoff appearance and district title.

Before that, he coached for three seasons at Saguaro High (1993-95) in Scottsdale, Ariz. Former Cornhusker All-America safety Mike Brown, now with the Chicago Bears, was among his players at Saguaro High, which won the Class 4A state championship when Brown was a senior.

Beck, who played college football at Central Florida, also coached at Missouri State (1996-98) and Kansas State (1991-92), where he was a graduate assistant.

He is a native of Youngstown, Ohio, and graduate of Cardinal Mooney High School. He was a junior at Cardinal Mooney when Carl Pelini was a senior and Bo Pelini was a freshman.



CARL PELINI (42)
**DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR,
DEFENSIVE LINE**

Pelini took a risk when he came to Nebraska in 2003 as a graduate assistant, replacing former Cornhusker Jimmy Burrow, who left to become defensive coordinator at North Dakota State. He was 37 years old and an established high school coach. He had been the head coach at Fitch High in Austintown, Ohio, a suburb of Youngstown. He had rebuilt a program that hadn't had a winning season in the eight years before he arrived. His 2002 team finished with a 6-4 record.

Prior to returning home, he spent five years as head football coach and athletic director at Winnetonka High School in Kansas City, Mo., also turning that program around. The school had only one winning season in 25 years before he arrived. His 1997 team was 8-2, and he was conference coach of the year.

He served as defensive coordinator under former Cornhusker Jeff Jamrog at Minnesota State-Mankato in 2004 and then spent three seasons as defensive line coach for Frank Solich at Ohio.

Pelini, who played football for two seasons at Columbia University, began his coaching career as an assistant at his high school alma mater, Cardinal Mooney, then spent two seasons as a graduate assistant at Kansas State (1989-90). He has masters degrees in journalism and education.

He also has confidence in his coaching ability. "I know my stuff," he told the Lincoln Journal Star recently. "I'm going to be a heck of a defensive coordinator. I don't doubt it for a second."



JOHN PAPUCHIS (29)
DEFENSIVE ENDS

Papuchis didn't play college football. He was a high school quarterback in Gaithersburg, Md. But his determination to coach can hardly be questioned. While still a student at Virginia Tech, he was a volunteer coach for a high school basketball team, a junior varsity team to be exact. His first team went 6-14. His second 14-6. "I'm as proud of that as anything I've done," he told the Lincoln Journal Star.

That was basketball, remember, and from that modest beginning, he was hired as a graduate assistant at Kansas in 2001, following his graduation from Virginia Tech. Though the Jayhawks' coaching staff was replaced soon after, he remained for two seasons, working with the defense.

After the second season, on a recommendation from a Kansas assistant who had left to join Nick Saban's staff at Louisiana State, Papuchis headed to Baton Rouge as a football intern. A year later, Saban left for the Miami Dolphins. But Papuchis was able to remain at LSU. Les Miles was hired as head coach. Miles hired Bo Pelini to be his defensive coordinator. And that's when Papuchis' association with Pelini began.



MIKE EKELER (36)
LINEBACKERS

Ekeler would seem to be a perfect fit at Nebraska. He's from the state, and he walked on to play college football, though for Kansas State rather than for the Cornhuskers.

The Blair, Neb., High School graduate, though only 5-foot-10, made a name for himself on Wildcat special teams coached by Bill Snyder — the name, nickname really, was "Crash."

Ekeler began coaching at Omaha Skutt High School, as a volunteer, and then at Manhattan, Kan., High. He was a defensive graduate assistant at Oklahoma in 2003 and 2004, when Bo Pelini was co-defensive coordinator there, then went to Louisiana State, where he was a graduate assistant for two seasons.

This past season, he worked as an intern with the Tiger football program.

In addition to coaching the linebackers, Ekeler will help coach special teams, speaking from his own experience at Kansas State. As with Papuchis, this is his first job as a full-time assistant.

But Bo Pelini has confidence in both him and Papuchis. They will be coaching "stars," Pelini has said.



MARVIN SANDERS (40)
SECONDARY

Sanders turned down an offer to coach the St. Louis Rams' secondary when Solich contacted him about coming to Nebraska in 2003. The decision was a "no-brainer," Sanders said at the time. "It wasn't even a question will I go to the NFL or come back to Nebraska. It's my second home.

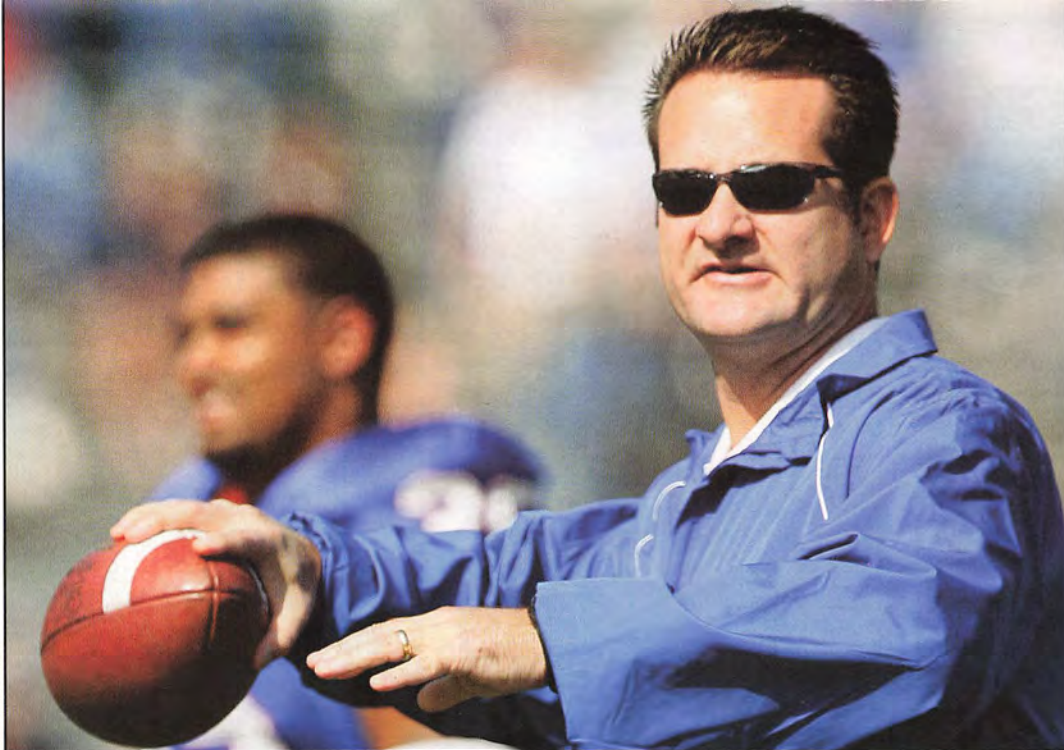
"And I love the opportunity that I'm here."

Sanders, who had been the secondary coach at Colorado State the previous two seasons, played at Nebraska from 1985 to 1989. He was a starter at free safety his senior season, before a dislocated shoulder limited his action. Despite the injury, he earned all-conference honorable mention.

The native of Markham, Ill., began his coaching career at Nebraska Wesleyan in 1992, working with the secondary. He spent one season at Minnesota-Morris (1994), coaching the secondary as well as serving as the school's sports information director, and then went to Nebraska-Omaha, where he spent five seasons, the last three as defensive coordinator. He coached defensive ends and outside linebackers for former Cornhusker Tony Samuel in 2000, before moving on to Colorado State.

Cotton also was an assistant at New Mexico State when he was there.

Under Sanders' direction in 2003, the Cornhuskers led the nation in interceptions and pass efficiency defense, and they set a school record with 47 turnovers.



Bo Pelini's coaching staff was completed with the Jan. 7 announcement that former Kansas assistant Tim Beck (left and below right) would be the running backs coach. The announcement was delayed until after the bowl games, as Beck completed his duties as receivers coach and passing game coordinator for the Jayhawks, who defeated Virginia Tech 24-21 in the Orange Bowl to finish 12-1. Like Bo and Carl Pelini, Beck is a native of Youngstown, Ohio, and a graduate of Cardinal Mooney High School.



JEFF JAMROG (42)
ASSISTANT ATHLETIC DIRECTOR
FOR FOOTBALL OPERATIONS

Jamrog, another former Cornhusker, walked on from Elkhorn, Neb., Mt. Michael and earned three letters as an outside linebacker (1985-87). He also was an Academic All-American as a senior.

He was an assistant coach at Nebraska from 2000 through 2003, coaching the defensive line.

The past four seasons he has been the head coach at Minnesota State in Mankato. In his first season there, the Mavericks were 6-5, their first winning season since 1994.

Jamrog has coached with Bo Pelini, and Carl Pelini was his defensive coordinator for one season.



Football Notes

INTERIM NO MORE

As you've probably noticed, Tom Osborne is no longer identified as interim athletic director. As of Dec. 19, the "interim" was dropped from his title, when Chancellor Harvey Perlman announced that the 70-year-old Osborne would be Nebraska's director of intercollegiate athletics until June 30, 2010.

The decision to drop "interim" was in the university's best interests, according to Perlman, who plans to begin a search for Osborne's successor in early 2010. Osborne will assist in the search.

"We've made some great strides over the last two months, but the chancellor and I agree that these next two years are crucial to keep our program moving forward," said Osborne.

"I have never been enamored with titles. At the same time, I think it's important for our entire athletic department to realize that we will continue moving down the same path we're already going. Change always breeds at least some uncertainty, and if removing 'interim' from my title helps everyone understand that we'll continue to be consistent in our approach, I'm all for that."

DISTINGUISHED AMERICAN

Osborne was to receive the Tuss McLaughry Award, the American Football Coaches Association's highest honor, at a dinner in conjunction with the AFCA Convention in Anaheim, Calif.

The Tuss McLaughry Award is named in honor of DeOrmand "Tuss" McLaughry, the first full-time secretary-treasurer of the AFCA. It was established in 1964 and is presented to a distinguished American (or Americans) for service to others. Previous recipients have included presidents Lyndon Johnson, Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and George Bush, as well as actors Burt Reynolds, Jimmy Stewart and John Wayne, entertainer Bob Hope and evangelist The Rev. Billy Graham.

Osborne is the third football coach to receive the award. The others were Eddie Robinson of Grambling State University and Tom Landry of the Dallas Cowboys.

MORE RECOGNITION FOR TOM

Osborne will receive the Bear Bryant Lifetime Achievement Award in mid-January in Houston. He and the late Bryant were the finalists in on-line voting for ESPN's "Greatest College Football Coach of All-Time." Osborne earned 52 percent of the votes to Bryant's 37 percent. Eddie Robinson received 4 percent of the vote, Joe Paterno 3 percent and Bobby Bowden, Woody Hayes, Barry Switzer and Knute Rockne 1 percent.

STAY OR GO

Marlon Lucky reportedly is considering declaring for the NFL Draft and bypassing his senior season at Nebraska. Lucky had not commented publicly on the matter as the Jan. 15 deadline for declaring approached. But Wayne Padden, his

guardian in North Hollywood, Calif., told the Omaha World-Herald that he was seriously considering the possibility. Several high-profile junior running backs are considering early departures. By the first week in January, Jamaal Charles of Texas, Kevin Smith of Central Florida and Rashard Mendenhall of Illinois had already announced they would be leaving.

Darren McFadden and Felix Jones of Arkansas, Steve Slaton of West Virginia, Ray Rice of Rutgers, Jonathan Stewart of Oregon and James Davis of Clemson were among others.

Lucky rushed for 1,019 yards and caught a school-record 75 passes for 705 yards last season.

HUSKER CONNECTION

Former Nebraska assistant Jerry Moore coached Appalachian State to a third consecutive national championship in Division I (Championship Subdivision, what was formerly Division I-AA) of the NCAA. Moore was the first assistant Osborne hired when he succeeded Bob Devaney as head coach in 1973. Actually, Osborne hired Moore following the 1972 season, before Devaney was persuaded to remain and try to coach an unprecedented third consecutive national championship team.

So Moore, an assistant to Hayden Fry at SMU, had to ask for his job back for one season. Fry took him back. Moore, whom Osborne hired to replace himself as receivers coach, was at Nebraska through the 1978 season.

Former Cornhusker administrative assistant (2001-03) Lance Leipold, in his first season as head coach at Wisconsin-Whitewater, directed the Warhawks to the NCAA Division III championship.

Wisconsin-Whitewater upset Mount Union (Ohio) in the playoff finals. The Warhawks lost to Mount Union in the championship game the previous two seasons, their only losses in 30 games.

BRIEFLY

- Nebraska might resurrect the Unity Council, which was disbanded by coach Bill Callahan. Former Cornhusker team psychologist Jack Stark told the Lincoln Journal Star that Osborne was interested in bringing back the council, which he established in 1991.

- Kody Spano, a dual-threat high school quarterback from Stephenville, Texas, indicated he would enroll for second semester at Nebraska and participate in spring practice. Despite a shoulder injury, he passed for 2,263 yards and 23 touchdowns as a senior. He visited Nebraska the first week in January.

- Dennis Wagner, the Cornhuskers' offensive line coach the past four seasons, has been hired as head coach at Western Carolina, a Championship Subdivision school in Cullowhee, N.C.

- Former Cornhusker quarterback Zac Taylor will be on coach Mike Sherman's staff at Texas A&M, possibly as a graduate assistant, according to the Lincoln Journal Star.

- Dave Kennedy, strength and conditioning coach under Callahan, has been hired at Texas A&M. ■



Tom Osborne is no longer the "interim" athletic director.

The Home Stretch

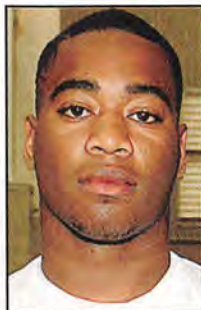
Nebraska's new staff targets new prospects

By Rick Shaw

With less than a month before Signing Day, Nebraska's football recruiting class of 2008 looked drastically different than it had just a few weeks earlier. In the month of December alone, eight athletes backed out of their commitments to the Huskers. In total, 14 players who once were included on Nebraska's commitment list, had



Eddie Brown



Alonzo Whaley

since reneged on their pledges to the Big Red.

Midway through January, the Huskers' recruiting class stood at 17 pledges. To meet their objective of signing a full allotment of 25 players to letters of intent in February, the Nebraska coaching staff blanketed the country in search of some new prospects.

Bo Pelini and his staff hit the state

of Texas hard during December and January, securing visits from a number of top athletes. Eddie Brown, a 6-foot-2, 266 pound defensive line/fullback prospect out of Waller, said he intended to see Lincoln before solidifying a college decision.

Rated as the No. 93 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com, Brown earned district defensive MVP honors in 2007. Possessing outstanding speed (4.5-second 40-yard dash), the Lone Star State standout amassed 99 tackles, 13 sacks, one interception and 34 tackles for loss as a senior. However, the Huskers see more upside from Brown on the offensive side of the ball.

"Most of the schools are looking at me at defensive tackle or defensive end," Brown said. "Nebraska likes me at fullback and Oklahoma State said they are looking at me for outside

NEBRASKA COMMITMENTS FOR 2008

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	40	Hometown (School)
Will Compton	LB	6-2	214	4.5	Bonne Terre, Mo. (North County)
Ben Cotton	TE	6-6	217	4.97	Ames, Iowa
Sean Fisher	LB	6-5	210	4.6	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)
David Grant	OL	6-6	278	5.0	Killeen, Texas
Ricky Henry	OL	6-4	300	5.2	Omaha, Neb. (Burke/North Dakota State College of Science)
*Tyson Hetzer	TE	6-7	265	4.75	Glendora, Calif. (Citrus CC)
Keelan Johnson	DB	6-0	195	4.5	Mesa, Ariz.
Micah Kreikemeier	LB	6-4	215	4.8	West Point (Central Catholic), Neb.
John Levorson	ATH	6-4	185	4.55	Crete, Neb.
Cameron Meredith	DE	6-4	222	4.6	Santa Ana, Calif. (Mater Dei)
Collins Okafor	RB	6-1	210	4.54	Omaha, Neb. (Westside)
Kyler Reed	ATH	6-3	204	4.5	Overland Park, Kan. (St. Thomas Aquinas)
Kody Spano	QB	6-2	202	4.7	Stephenville, Texas
Baker Steinkuhler	OL	6-6	290	4.88	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
Brandon Thompson	OL	6-6	280	5.08	The Woodlands, Texas
Quentin Toailoa	DT	6-5	275	5.2	Redlands, Calif. (East Valley)
David Whitmore	DB	6-2	190	4.5	Port Arthur, Texas (Memorial)

*Signed letter of intent

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linebacker.

"Right now, I have 16 scholarship offers. Probably my top schools that I have offers from are Nebraska, TCU, Missouri, Arizona State, Oklahoma State and Texas Tech. I want to stay close to home, but if I got to play right away at a school farther away, then I might go farther."

Linebacker Alonzo Whaley is another Texas prospect giving a long, hard look at the Huskers. The 6-0, 213-pound prospect from Madisonville said he too planned to visit Lincoln before finalizing his college plans. Though the Huskers didn't offer a scholarship until mid-December, the speedy linebacker (4.58 40) said the new Nebraska coaching staff quickly captured his interest.

"Coach (Mike) Ekeler is great," Whaley said. "He was just telling me how I could help their program. They're real interested in me, and they tell me that I'd have the option to play right away or redshirt if I was interested. Coach Ekeler was telling me about the whole Nebraska thing when he was here."

Rated a three-star recruit by Rivals, Whaley was a two-time first-team all-state selection at Madisonville, shattering the school's tackling records in the process. In addition to the Huskers, he also holds scholarship offers from Oklahoma State, Arizona State, Louisiana Tech, Houston, Missouri and UTEP.

Whaley's younger brother, Chris Whaley, has a Nebraska offer. The younger Whaley was the overall district player of the year as a running back and has been named to the 2009 preseason Rivals100 list.

Two prospects from Klein also count the Huskers among their top schools. Brian Moore (6-1, 197) and John Youboty (6-4, 246) both plan to make a trip to Lincoln before the end of the month.

Moore, a Tulsa commit, used blazing speed (10.9-second 100 meters) from his outside linebacker spot in 2007 to rack up 120 tackles, 12 sacks and an interception. He earned first-team all-district honors and was named his team's defensive MVP after his senior season.

According to the Moore, it's in the defensive backfield where the Huskers see him contributing.

RECRUITING NOTES

Huskers Add Commitments

By Sean Stevens

After seeing a number of committed prospects switch their pledges early in the Bo Pelini Era, the recruiting ball has finally started rolling again.

In mid-December, defensive tackle Quentin Toailoa of Redlands, Calif. added his name to the Huskers' list. The 6-foot-6, 285-pounder chose NU over scholarship offers from a host of schools, including Oregon State, Fresno State, Arizona and Utah.



Quentin Toailoa

Toailoa had visited Nebraska in late October during the Texas A&M game and came away excited about the possibility of becoming a Husker. His mother, Tammy Ciraulo, expressed the family's thoughts after that trip.

"Well, we're going to weigh our options and see what we feel is going to be the most equitable as far as playing time and his personal development," Ciraulo said. "I'll tell you that I don't know if you can get more fans to a game from what I saw on Saturday. That made a huge impact."

Thoughts of the visit remained in Toailoa's mind, and he finally decided to make his pledge official.

"I did it on Dec. 20 to coach Carl Pelini. I called him, actually, when I made the decision, and they were all fired up," he said. "It was a lot from when I was out there on my (official) visit. It was great . . . they were there for me from the beginning. Even though there's a new staff now, I like having Bo Pelini and his brother there and them being a defensive-oriented staff. It's a good fit for me."

Toailoa should have an opportunity for early playing time, as the Huskers are searching for depth at defensive tackle.

The second recent oral commitment is quarterback Kody Spano of Stephenville, Texas. At 6-2 and 202 pounds with 4.7-second speed in the 40-yard dash, Rivals.com ranks Spano as the No. 7 dual-threat quarterback in the nation.



Kody Spano

His story is an intriguing one. Spano committed to Oklahoma State in February of 2007, planning to enroll in January of 2008. However, in early December, things changed for the Cowboys.

"Two of their kids that were supposed to be on course for graduation in December didn't pass a class or something, and they're having to keep them for another semester," Spano said at the time. "They only have one spot, and instead of taking me they're taking another recruit they've been recruiting."

Instead of waiting until June, Spano decided to look at other schools. Nebraska hosted the entire Spano family January 4 weekend. He made a commitment to the Husker staff before he left Lincoln.

"Yes, I did . . . to Coach (Shawn) Watson," he said. "He is great; he is awesome. He is a real nice guy, and he is a really good coach. I like him a lot."

After a junior year during which he threw for 2,889 yards and 31 touchdowns, with 10 interceptions, Spano fought through an injury-plagued senior year to put up 2,190 yards and 23 touchdowns, with nine interceptions. He also ran for nearly 900 yards and 21 touchdowns over those two seasons combined.

NU also received a commitment from offensive lineman David Grant (6-6, 278) of Killeen, Texas. That softened the blow from Dan Hoch of Harlan, Iowa, switching his pledge to Missouri. ■

"Most schools, including Nebraska, like me at strong safety," Moore said. "I love to hit and play physical. I'm a real reliable arm tackler but, if given the chance, I'll lay the wood to an opponent."

Though he still considers himself a Golden Hurricane pledge, Moore said that could change with a good visit to Nebraska.

"I have offers from Northwestern, Navy, Air Force, Nebraska and Tulsa, but I'm pretty much down to Nebraska and Tulsa now," Moore said. "I'm just going to wait until I visit both of those places and then make a final decision."

Youboty, Moore's defensive teammate, was named All-Greater Houston this past fall after recording 77 tackles and 8 1/2 sacks as a senior defensive end. The standout pass rushing specialist said he has officially narrowed his list to four schools, and Nebraska is still in the mix.

"Yes, my final four schools are Michigan State, Nebraska, California and Missouri," Youboty said. "Me and Brian (Moore) are planning to visit Nebraska together. We'll go up there to what it's like, and then we'll talk about whether it's the right place for us."

In addition to raiding the state of Texas, Nebraska hopes to steal at least one prospect away from Big Ten territory before Signing Day.

Athlete Zach Domicone has narrowed the scope of his college selection to Nebraska and Connecticut and said he hopes to make a decision by the end of January. The 6-3, 215-pound prospect out of Xenia (Ohio) Beavercreek admitted that the rich history of Nebraska football would be hard to beat.

"You can't really match that tradition that they (Nebraska) have," Domicone said. "That's a big advantage that they have in my mind. But then at UConn, they're building something."

"I guess I'd just like a comfortable fit. I want to go there and feel like I belong there."

Domicone starred at quarterback as a senior, rushing for 1,111 yards and passing for another 605 yards. He led his league in rushing with those marks and combined that with an interception at linebacker. He said Nebraska likes his potential on the



Nebraska recruit Baker Steinkuhler of Lincoln Southwest High School played on defense in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl at San Antonio, Texas, in early January. But his college future probably will be in the offensive line. Steinkuhler's West team lost to the East 33-23.

defensive side of the ball.

"They are talking to me about playing either safety or WILL linebacker," Domicone said. "Either one is OK with me."

Other prospects looking to visit Lincoln over the next few weeks include athlete Brodrick Smith (6-3, 200) of Garden City, Kan., and receiver Khiry Cooper (6-2, 175) of Calvary Academy in Shreveport, La.

Smith, rated the No. 5 prospect in the state by Rivals, rushed for 1,500 yards and 17 touchdowns as a quarterback in 2007. However, it's at receiver or defensive back where schools like Illinois, Nebraska, Kansas State, Oregon and Arizona

think he can make his mark in college.

Cooper finished his senior campaign with 60 catches for 1,038 yards and 16 touchdowns. He's considering offers from Arkansas, Florida, Tulsa and others, in addition to Nebraska.

After a whirlwind season that saw their recruiting class turned upside down, the Nebraska coaches are working to finish the 2008 class off strong. With a solid push during January, they should manage to do just that. ■

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Getting U

Husker sophomore guard Henry learns to adjust to weather, playing defense

Stories by Mike Babcock

When Sek Henry walks along Memorial Stadium's west side into a strong north wind, he is reminded of what friends told him before he came to Nebraska: It would get very cold in the winter.

He shrugged off what they said.

Sure it would. But "it's not going to be that cold," he thought.

He was wrong, of course.

"Oh, my gosh," he said, describing his first winter in Nebraska.

When the Cornhuskers' sophomore guard attended prep school in North Carolina, The Patterson School, to raise his standardized test scores, the basketball team traveled to Rhode Island and encountered a blizzard. And "that was really crazy," he said. "But I never thought I was going to be in that predicament again. Then I come to Nebraska and I'm like, 'Wow, this is very, very cold.'"

Henry grew up in Los Angeles, which explains the shock of winter weather in Nebraska. And if things had worked out, he would have been playing at a warm-weather school, Arizona State.

He committed to the Sun Devils out of high school. Tony Benford recruited him, and the two connected. When Benford left Arizona State to join Doc Sadler's staff at UTEP in the summer of 2006, Henry, who had finished a season at The Patterson

School, took a recruiting trip to El Paso.

Henry figured he would accept UTEP's scholarship offer. But then Sadler was hired at Nebraska in the late summer. Benford went along. And Henry found himself headed to Lincoln, too, sight unseen, never having visited the campus. He would be Sadler's first Cornhusker recruit.

Oh yes, the weather in Lincoln was "pretty hot" when he arrived.

Henry had an even more difficult adjustment to make during his first year at Nebraska, however, on the basketball court. He was a scorer in high school and prep school. He scored 51 points in a game at The Patterson School and averaged 24 points as a senior at Lynwood High School, after averaging 20 points as a junior. Even an off-night offensively for him would have been good for most players.

"I was basically able to do whatever I wanted (in high school). And even in prep school, I was able to shoot the ball any time I wanted because it was like plays (set) for me all the time," he said.

"In high school, you could rest on offense sometimes. You come down court and tell them to go that way and they would go that way. Then you come down the play after and try to score."

As for defense, "in high school some teams don't even play defense," he said.



Henry wasn't a "big-time" defensive player, by his own admission. He figured the transition to Nebraska

Used to It



Nebraska sophomore guard Sek Henry, a scorer in high school and prep school, has learned that "if you're not going to play defense, team defense at Nebraska, basically you're not going to play."

most young players, his basketball identity came from an ability to score. "When you score a lot of points in high school, you have a certain ego coming into college, thinking that you're the man, which you're supposed to do," he said.

"You always want to think you're the man, that you're a winner."

Sadler encourages a winning attitude, certainly. But that's achieved as much on defense as on offense. What Henry quickly learned was, "if you're not going to play defense, team defense at Nebraska, basically you're not going to play. I want to win. Scoring points is good, but winning is the key. If you're scoring six points and you're winning games, that's still big," said Henry. "Coach has reinforced that."

Sadler emphasizes team defense, another concept to which Henry had to adjust. Though his focus was scoring, he was willing to acknowledge the value of man-to-man defense, locking up his man. But such an approach is "selfish," he said. "Just because you lock your man up and we lose a game, that's being selfish. If you're helping your teammates out (defensively) and we win game, that's better."

"Coach is very smart. At first, I was like, 'Man, I don't even think he knows what he's talking about.' But it seems like I'm starting to mature more and I'm starting to understand."

Henry started 15 of the first 16 games as a freshman, and he was one of only two players to see action in every game last season. Charles Richardson was the other. But he struggled in Big 12 play.

His shooting percentage plummeted to .262 in conference games. He

started and played a personal season-high 36 minutes in the conference opener at Iowa State, then came off the bench and played only 3 minutes in the third game against Colorado. That's how it would go, up and down.

During a three-game stretch late in the season, he played just 16 minutes, combined. He started doubting himself, and "when you start doubting yourself, you don't play as aggressive," he said. "My mom is always telling me it's a mind thing, just keep your head up and just keep playing hard."

He has taken his mom's advice. "This year, I keep playing hard no matter what," he said.

Henry is an emotional player. He grew up talking smack in pick-up games, as everyone did, trying to get in each other's head. On Los Angeles playgrounds, "we don't take nothing from nobody, so we go back at 'em, talk smack back, get emotional. So that's how I've always been," he said.

In this season's first exhibition game against Nebraska Wesleyan, he drew a technical foul for his overly emotional reaction following a slam dunk. Such reactions might seem "cool," he said.

But officials don't always agree, as Sadler was quick to point out. "So you just need to stay calm and show your emotions by playing hard, defending up or grabbing a rebound," Henry said.

When he first got to Nebraska, he wouldn't have imagined ever saying such a thing. He was emotional. That's just how it was. And when someone suggested otherwise, he resisted.

"You'd be like, 'Forget it man, forget all this. I just want to do what I can do.' That's not the case (now). It's a team thing, and you've just got to take a deep breath. That's what I do," he said. "I take a deep breath and try

would be easy enough because of his proficiency at putting in points. Never mind the defense. As with

to relax. I think that really helps me because when I'm really angry, my mind just goes blank and I can't think. When I take my deep breath and relax, man, everything just starts coming."

He had three fouls in the first half of a victory against Alcorn State in late December, and none in the second half, thanks to his deep-breathing relaxation technique.

Henry has learned a lot at Nebraska, off the court as well as on.

He has learned a little about meteorology, just as he learned a little about entomology at The Patterson School in Lenoir, N.C. It was hot there when he arrived, too. That was fine for a southern Californian. But the "big old bugs" he found there, well, "they're so much bigger in North Carolina than they are in Los Angeles," he said. "Man, I saw the beetles and the water bugs, everything was just bigger.

"The spiders, oh gosh . . . I just got used to it."

Like he has gotten used to the cold wind blowing along Memorial Stadium's west side. ■

BASKETBALL NOTES



Oregon's Malik Hairston (1) appears to have nowhere to go, as he's surrounded by Nebraska's (from left) Steve Harley, Aleks Maric, Sek Henry and Ryan Anderson during NU's 88-79 victory Dec. 15.

RESULTS, SCHEDULE

(HOME GAMES AT DEVANEY CENTER, UNLESS NOTED)

Nov. 2	*Nebraska Wesleyan	W 70-50
Nov. 6	*Wayne State	W 74-51
Nov. 10	Presbyterian College	W 67-52
Nov. 17	Alabama A&M	W 59-42
Nov. 20	Norfolk State	W 83-48
Nov. 24	@Creighton	L 74-62
Nov. 26	IPFW	W 79-62
Dec. 2	Arizona State	W 62-47
Dec. 5	@Western Kentucky	L 69-62 (ot)
Dec. 9	Rutgers	W 63-51
Dec. 11	Savannah State	W 82-37
Dec. 15	Oregon (Qwest Center, Omaha)	W 88-79 (ot)
Dec. 22	North Carolina Central	W 71-28
Dec. 29	Alcorn State	W 77-53
Jan. 4	Maryland-East. Shore	W 86-50
Jan. 12	Kansas (ESPN)	
Jan. 15	@Colorado (FSN Midwest)	
Jan. 19	Baylor (ESPN+)	
Jan. 26	@Kansas (ESPN+)	
Jan. 30	@Missouri (FSN Midwest)	
Feb. 2	Iowa State (ESPN+)	
Feb. 6	@Kansas State (FSN Midwest)	
Feb. 9	Texas Tech (ESPN+)	
Feb. 13	Missouri	
Feb. 16	@Iowa State (ESPN+)	
Feb. 20	Kansas State (ESPN2)	
Feb. 23	@Texas A&M (ESPN+)	
Feb. 27	Oklahoma	
Mar. 1	@Oklahoma State (ESPN+)	
Mar. 4	@Texas (FSN Midwest)	
Mar. 9	Colorado (FSN Midwest)	
Mar. 13-16	Big 12 Championship, Kansas City (ESPN+)	

*Exhibition

STARTING AT THE TOP

The Nebraska men's basketball team couldn't save the best for last. Coach Doc Sadler's 11-2 Cornhuskers, were scheduled to open their Big 12 schedule against Kansas at the Devaney Sports Center on Jan. 12, in a game televised by ESPN. The Jayhawks were 15-0 and ranked No. 3 nationally.

After the final nonconference game, an 86-50 victory against Maryland Eastern Shore, Sadler was asked if his team was ready to play Kansas in the conference opener for both teams. "It doesn't matter if it was the first game or the 16th game, I don't know that we're ready for Kansas," he said.

"They're, no question, at the top of this league."

The Jayhawks were the only Big 12 team in the Associated Press Top 10 the week conference play began. Texas A&M, at 14-1 in nonconference games and No. 11 in the AP poll, was ranked 10th in the USA Today/ESPN coaches poll. Texas was No. 12 and No. 13, respectively.

Every Big 12 team finished nonconference play with a winning record. The Atlantic Coast Conference was the only other that could say that. The Big 12 was 3-0 against the ACC.

Nebraska played nonconference teams with which it could match up in size. With Big 12 teams, however, "it's going to be night in and night out a much bigger front line," said Sadler.

"And we're going to have to be ready for that."

The Cornhuskers will have to be ready for more than bigger opponents. "This basketball team has to play as hard or harder, they've got to make fewer mistakes, than the other team once we get into Big 12 play or we're not going to have a chance," Sadler said. "We're not talented enough or deep enough to go out there and play the teams we're going to be playing and not be ready to play."

Oh yes, Nebraska plays at Kansas on Jan. 26, just two weeks after the Big 12 opener.

SIGNATURE VICTORY

Though he would have preferred another nonconference game after Christmas — the Cornhuskers played two, against Alcorn State as well as Maryland Eastern Shore — Sadler was satisfied with the nonconference schedule. "I don't think we needed any tougher of a schedule," he said.

The highlight was an 88-79 overtime victory against Oregon at the Qwest Center in Omaha on Dec. 15. Oregon was ranked No. 16 nationally at the time. The game drew 12,109.

Aleks Maric scored 23 points and pulled down seven rebounds while Ryan Anderson had 21 points and nine rebounds to lead the way. The two were a combined 13-of-13 from the free throw line.



Nebraska fans mob coach Doc Sadler in a postgame celebration after the Huskers upset No. 16 Oregon in overtime before a Qwest Center Omaha crowd of 12,109 on a snowy Saturday afternoon. The game was played on a replica of Nebraska's home court, which NU purchased for the neutral-site game.

The victory was Nebraska's first-ever nonconference victory against a ranked opponent outside of Lincoln. The Cornhuskers' all-time record is now 9-34. The eight other victories were: No. 20 Creighton, 73-61 (2006-07); No. 20 Minnesota, 80-60 (2002-03); No. 15 Michigan State, 96-91 in overtime (1994-95); No. 5 Michigan State, 71-69 (1990-91); No. 15 Arkansas, 67-54 (1983-84); No. 7 Duquesne, 82-77 (1969-70); No. 1 Michigan, 74-73 (1964-65); No. 17 Marquette, 62-60 (1958-59).

Maric and Ade Dagunduro earned Big 12 honors for the week of the Oregon game. Maric was named the conference player of the week and Dagunduro was named the conference rookie of the week. Dagunduro scored 15 points and pulled down seven rebounds against the Ducks.

The Cornhuskers also were selected as the "Team of the Week" by ESPN.com's national basketball writer Andy Katz, who wrote, based on the Oregon victory: "If you concede the top three spots in the Big 12 to Kansas, Texas and Texas A&M, then you could argue that Nebraska is in the mix with Kansas State, Oklahoma State, Oklahoma, Missouri and Baylor for the No. 4 spot."

The conference coaches picked Nebraska 10th in their preseason poll.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

In addition to rebounding, where size is going to be an on-going concern, the Cornhuskers will have to take care of the ball in order to be successful in the conference. They committed 177 turnovers in 13 nonconference games, but only seven in the last against Maryland Eastern Shore.

"I don't care who you're playing, at least you're taking care of the ball," Sadler said.

Freshman Cookie Miller, who established himself as Charles Richardson's successor at point guard, committed only one turnover in the final two non-conference games, with a combined 19 assists.

GOING FAST

No surprise here. Maric was the team's leading scorer (16.2 points) and rebounder (8.4) during nonconference play. The senior from Sydney, Australia, shot 61.2 percent from the field, blocked 26 shots and made 18 steals, second on the team to Miller's 27. He played an average of 26.5 minutes.

"It's flying by," Maric said of his col-

lege career. "The first semester, from a school perspective, flew by. I'm not an Einstein or anything, but it flew by. Basketball-wise it's going by so quickly; you're enjoying it, but it's going by too quick. I blinked once, 2007 was gone, and it's 2008."

UNSELFISH

Sadler was asked what he had learned about his team during nonconference play. The players "really like each other . . . unselfish team, and I think it's got some competitors on it," he said. "I think they're going to compete no matter what. So that gives you a chance."

"Looking back, we didn't start shooting the ball real well, but I thought we could shoot the basketball and it's just a matter of taking open shots and guys getting confidence."

The Cornhuskers shot 49.5 percent from the field, including 36.5 percent from 3-point range. "If you look at the last eight or nine games, I think our shooting has come around (to) about where I thought it would be," said Sadler. "Sek (Henry) can hit open shots. Ade (Dagunduro) can hit open shots. Jay-R (Strowbridge) can definitely hit open shots, so guys that can make 'em are getting them." ■

Modest Beginning

Montgomery's basketball career quickly blossomed

Her first organized basketball experience was, to be kind, forgettable. But Cory Montgomery hasn't forgotten — some of the details, yes, though not what happened. That remains vivid

She was an elementary school student in Cannon Falls, Minn., fourth grade. No, the more she thinks about it, the more certain she is that it was the fifth grade. Her dad was the coach. She knows that. He played basketball in college, as did her mom. So she probably inherited her love of the game.

"I'm sure I got a basketball toy when I was like 2 or 3 years old," she said.

Anyway, there was a lot of interest in that first team on which she played. "We had about 50 million girls out because everyone wanted to play basketball," the Husker sophomore said.

The "50 million" is a complete dramatization of course, but you get my point (as that television commercial with the green gecko says). Cannon Falls' population is about 4,000.

Had sheer numbers been the deciding factor, her team might have overwhelmed the opposition in its first game. It didn't, however. "We got killed," she said, apparently not overstating.

"I want to say 56-4, but don't quote me on that. It was pretty brutal."

From that modest beginning, her basketball career quickly blossomed. She was suiting up with the high school varsity team by the end of the season as a seventh-grader. And she was starting for the varsity as an eighth-grader. She was the team's most valuable player, in fact, the first of five times.

"My school is really small,"



Sophomore forward Cory Montgomery scored in double figures in 10 of 14 nonconference games, including six of the last seven.

Montgomery said, as if that explained her success. She was a three-time area player of the year and led Cannon Falls to the Class 2A state championship as a senior, averaging 19.7 points and 10.8 rebounds. She had 37 points and 17 rebounds in the semifinal game.

She also played for an AAU team that won a state title in 2005. By then, she was seriously considering Nebraska from a list of schools including Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Drake and Wisconsin-Green Bay. All were within reasonable driving distance of Cannon Falls, located

about 35 miles south of Minneapolis-St. Paul and about 40 miles north of Rochester, Minn.

"I was going to stay in the Midwest so I could drive home or my parents could come down and watch me," the 6-foot-2 Montgomery said. "I'm a big family person."

She's also a "really" small-town person.

"Going through Omaha is huge for me," she said.

Lincoln isn't exactly a small town. But the university is a self-contained community in which she's comfortable, has been since the summer after

her freshman year in high school. She was playing on an AAU team and received some basketball camp brochures, including one from Nebraska.

At that point, it was all about timing. Nebraska's camp dates fit her schedule. The next summer, she came back, and the summer after that. "I just loved the atmosphere here," she said.

She also was impressed with the academic support system. She earned a place on the Big 12 Commissioner's Academic Honor Roll in both semesters of her freshman year. Her major is accounting, and she carried a 3.354 cumulative grade-point average into the fall semester.

Besides basketball, Montgomery played volleyball and softball in high school, though she gave up the latter before her junior year in high school. She earned four letters in volleyball, and hasn't lost interest in that sport, however. "I really miss volleyball sometimes," she said.

Last year in particular, she would go to the NU Coliseum to watch the Husker volleyball team and missed it "a lot," she said. "But basketball is my true love, hands down."

The transition from high school to a major college program such as Nebraska's can be difficult. But it was made easier for Montgomery by coach Connie Yori and her assistants. They made it clear what would be expected. "So I knew ahead of time what my role was going to be," said Montgomery.

Her role as a freshman was coming off the bench, of course. She was the only newcomer to see action in every game, averaging 5.3 points, on 49.2-percent shooting, and 2.2 rebounds.

She moved into the starting lineup this season when junior Kelsey Griffin was sidelined by a rib injury. She started the final four nonconference games and went into Big 12 Conference play with the team's third-highest average in both points (11.7) and rebounds (5.3).

She scored in double figures in 10 of 14 nonconference games, including six of the last seven.

Starting requires a different mindset. "Coming off the bench, I get to watch the beginning of the game and the flow of the game, how things are going, what's working and what's not working for those first few minutes," said Montgomery. "So when I go in, I'm ready and mentally prepared."

"Starting, as soon as the ball's tipped, you've got to be ready to play."

RESULTS, SCHEDULE

(HOME GAMES AT DEVANEY CENTER)

Nov. 1	*Nebraska-Kearney	W 62-48
Nov. 5	*Nebraska-Omaha	W 78-50
Nov. 9	UTEP	W 81-74
Nov. 11	Mississippi	W 80-59
Nov. 17	Florida	W 90-63
Nov. 23	**Marist	L 66-59
Nov. 24	**Utah	L 56-44
Nov. 25	**Akron	W 75-47
Nov. 30	Creighton	W 79-65
Dec. 2	Robert Morris	W 73-58
Dec. 8	USC	W 87-69
Dec. 13	@Cal State Bakersfield	W 66-62
Dec. 15	@Long Beach State	W 75-52
Dec. 22	@Ohio State	L 86-74
Dec. 30	Denver	W 73-38
Jan. 2	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	W 67-39
Jan. 9	Texas	W 56-45
Jan. 12	Kansas (FSN)	
Jan. 16	@Oklahoma (Sooner Network)	
Jan. 19	@Iowa State	
Jan. 23	Texas A&M (FSN Midwest)	
Jan. 26	@Baylor	
Jan. 30	Kansas State	
Feb. 3	@Missouri (FSN)	
Feb. 6	@Colorado (FSNRM)	
Feb. 10	Oklahoma State (ESPN2)	
Feb. 17	@Kansas (ESPN360/Sunflower)	
Feb. 21	Missouri (FSN Midwest)	
Feb. 24	@Texas Tech	
Feb. 27	@Kansas State (FSN Midwest)	
Mar. 2	Colorado	
Mar. 5	Iowa State	
Mar. 11-15	Big 12 Championship, Kansas City	

*Exhibition

**Oahu Classic

Either way, starting or coming off the bench, Montgomery is ready. As with any athlete, she's competitive, "even if it's playing a card game. I hate losing, with basketball or anything in general in life, like grades or just fun games," she said. "If I lose a card game like Crazy Eights, I get really frustrated."

Recently, she and her teammates

were playing the music video game Guitar Hero. She was playing the game for only the second time. "It was really fun," she said. "You can play head to head against one another, and when we lose, you should see us. It gets pretty dirty."

She was matched against freshman Catheryn Redmon, who has "played for a long time," she said. "I ended up beating her a couple of times. But some definitely kicked my butt."

Oh yes, Montgomery is musically inclined, although that had little or nothing to do with playing Guitar Hero. She can play the clarinet, the flute, the saxophone and the piano. First was piano. She began taking lessons early on. Then it was the clarinet in the school band because her friends were in it, too.

She had to give up the piano because of academics and athletics. However, she was able to continue playing the other three instruments during the school day, as part of class.

Saxophone is probably her favorite of the three because she is "big into jazz." She also likes classical music, Bach in particular. And though she quit taking piano lessons "in the seventh or eighth grade because I didn't have enough time," she can still play. She'll never let that go.

She was "really young" when she started taking piano lessons. "I don't even know (when)," she said. "It might have been fifth grade . . . well, probably third."

Fifth grade was that first basketball game.

Or maybe it was fourth grade. She's not sure. ■

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL NOTES

SAME AS THE MEN

The Nebraska women's basketball team finished nonconference play with an 11-3 record. And like the men, the Husker women faced a tough opponent in the opener, playing Texas at the Devaney Sports Center. Texas came to Lincoln with a 12-2 record and No. 15 or No. 17 national ranking, depending on the poll. Also like the men's teams, every Big 12 women's team began conference play with winning records. In addition to Texas, Oklahoma, Baylor, Texas A&M, Oklahoma State and Colorado were in at least one of the two major Top 25 polls, with Texas Tech, Kansas and Iowa State receiving votes.

GRIFFIN OUT

Junior Kelsey Griffin missed the final four nonconference games with a

cracked rib. She was replaced in the starting line-up by sophomore Cory Montgomery.

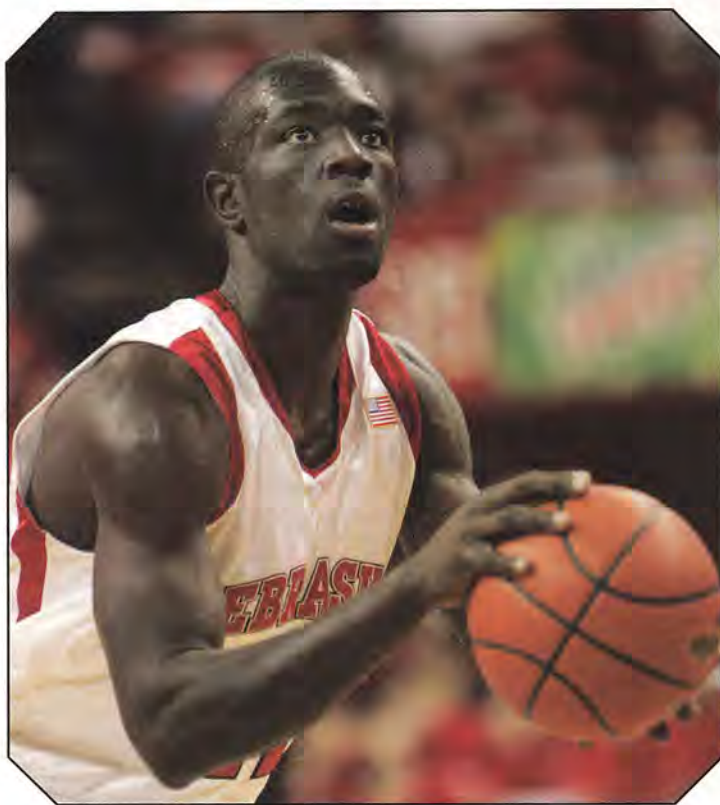
Griffin did not practice or play from Dec. 14 to Jan. 2.

Prior to missing the Long Beach State game, the Huskers' All-Big 12 forward, had a streak of 74 consecutive starts. The streak was the longest in the Big 12.

The rest of the starting line-up was the same for every nonconference game: senior Danielle Page, junior transfer Tay Hester, sophomore Yvonne Turner and freshman Dominique Kelley.

Page led the Huskers in scoring (12.6) and rebounding (7.4) during nonconference play. Griffin followed, averaging 11.9 points and 5.6 rebounds. Freshman Kaitlyn Burke led the team in 3-point shots, making 19 (in 58 attempts. Kelley was second with 11 (in 29 attempts). ■

10 QUESTIONS



Scott Baur

Individual goals? Not for Ade Dagunduro. "I try not to set individual goals because my role on the team can change dramatically, day in and day out," he said after the Nebraska basketball team finished nonconference play with an 11-2 record. "Our main goal from the start was to make the NCAA tournament. And we put ourselves in good position. So we've just got to continue to progress in the Big 12."

Dagunduro, the brother of former Cornhusker football player Ola Dagunduro, was a big part of the nonconference success. The transfer from Antelope Valley College stepped into the lineup immediately, starting every game and averaging 11.4 points and 4.7 rebounds.

He also established himself as an intense, aggressive defender.

His responsibility on offense has been "to relieve pressure on big Al (Aleks Maric). He receives double teams and triple teams night in and night out," said Dagunduro, who shot 54.5 percent from the field, including a team-best 49.4 percent from 3-point range in nonconference games.

He was told the intensity would increase in Big 12 play.

"So I just have to prepare myself and be ready for it," he said.

What's the best thing served at the training table?

"There's a variety of things, but I would have to say barbequed chicken, macaroni and cheese and steak. They have steak almost every night, and when they do, I'm on it. I love the steak."

If someone visited you in Los Angeles, what would you show them?

"First and foremost, I'd probably want to show them Hollywood because that's what most people want to see. When we got done touring Hollywood, I'd probably take them to Venice Beach and then give them a tour of my city,

with

ADE DAGUNDURO

Junior Forward
Inglewood, Calif.

Inglewood. Hollywood's not that special to me, growing up near it, but you see how special it is to other people, seeing stars everywhere. You can tell if people aren't from there, definitely."

If your life were made into a movie, whom would you pick to play your character?

"That's a tough one. I would probably have to pick Taye Diggs because he's a good-looking guy."

What three things do you absolutely have to have on your iPod?

"Raheem DeVaughn, Musiq Soulchild and Donell Jones; those are all R&B/neo-soul artists and I love neo-soul music. That's what I listen to before games and pretty much all the time. It relaxes me. A lot of guys want to get hyped before the game and listen to rap or rock music. I like to listen to slow music, to help mellow me out and start concentrating a little bit more."

Who's the funniest guy on the team?

"We have a lot of characters on the team, but I'll have to go with Sek Henry. He's just naturally funny. He can make you laugh in any situation. He's just that silly. Sometimes, you see the serious side. When you see the funny side, it's hilarious. He finds a way to make you laugh in the oddest situations. We can be dead serious on the court and he can say something to have everybody laughing. He's a funny guy. That's natural LA hilarity."

If you could spend 30 minutes with a celebrity, who would it be and what would you ask?

"It would be Fela Kuti. I couldn't spend time with him now because he's deceased. But he was a Nigerian ju-ju music player, famous all over the world. He tried to run for president in Nigeria but he never got the chance because he was kind of exiled because of his political views. I'd just want to sit down with him and pick his brain, see where he was coming from."

Kobe Bryant or Dwyane Wade?

"Kobe Bryant, mainly because I'm an LA guy and he plays for the Lakers. But his style, I just love it. It's kind of a smooth style, but at the same time, he's aggressive."

If you could excel at a sport other than basketball at the collegiate level, what would it be?

"It would be soccer first and football second. To be honest, soccer is my favorite sport and football's my second favorite, other than basketball. I played football throughout high school, but never got a chance to play soccer. My father loved soccer, growing up in Nigeria. And he turned me and my brothers into huge soccer fans."

What's the best movie you've seen lately?

"It would have to be 'Superbad.' I watched it on DVD and it's hilarious, kind of a comical, young-guy movie. Aleks Maric recommended it to me. It wasn't too bad."

What will you absolutely not eat?

"Mayonnaise, I absolutely hate mayonnaise. If it was the last thing, I'd probably eat it, but I hate mayonnaise with a passion. It's always been that way. If it's on my sub (sandwich), chances are I'm not going to eat the sub." ■

CHAIRMEN OF THE BOARDS



Leroy Chalk

(Venson Hamilton's school-career record for rebounds would appear to be safe in the immediate future. But, barring the unforeseen, Cornhusker senior Aleks Maric will have moved up to second on the all-time list by season's end, well ahead of the closest competitors. Huskers Illustrated takes a quick look at some of the best rebounders in Nebraska history.)

LEROY CHALK (1969-71) NO. 51 6-7, 218 Big Sandy, Texas

Chalk, a center, was regularly matched against taller opponents. But he created problems for them because of his quickness and tremendous strength. He pulled down 782 rebounds to set the school career record, which held for more than a quarter of a century. He still ranks second to Venson Hamilton on the career list, despite playing only three varsity seasons. NCAA rules prohibited freshmen from varsity competition when he arrived at Nebraska in 1967, without his distinctive Afro hairstyle by the way. He led the Cornhusker freshmen in rebounding, with a record 112, as well as in field goal percentage. He was an immediate success as a sophomore. The Nebraska media guide described him as "one of the most colorful and effective big men" in the Big Eight Conference and a "real crowd-pleaser with hustle and ability wherever he plays." He broke the school single-season rebound record as a sophomore with 257 and then broke it again as a senior with 290, a total that now ranks third behind Hamilton's 315 in 1998 and Chuck Jura's 305 in 1972. Chalk and Jura teamed up for two seasons, during which the Cornhuskers were a combined 34-17. He led the Big Eight in field goal percentage as a sophomore (.538) and shot 52.4 percent from the field for his career, averaging just under 10 points. But it was as a rebounder and shot-blocker that he distinguished himself. He was a 13th-round draft pick of the Boston Celtics but went to France, where he had a successful professional career. ■

LISTS

SEASON FREE THROW PERCENTAGE, MEN

(Minimum 2 attempts/game)

1. Jack Moore (1982) 123-131	.939
2. Cary Cochran (2002) 71-77	.9221
3. Jack Moore (1981) 118-128	.9219
4. Jack Moore (1980) 184-211	.872
5. David Ponce (1984) 67-77	.870
6. Nate Johnson (2004)	
103-119	.866
7. Kent Reckewey (1973)	
35-41	.854
8. Tom Baack (1966) 92-108	.852
9. Brian Carr (1986) 79-93	.849
10. Jamar Johnson (1992)	
53-63	.841

SEASON FREE THROW PERCENTAGE, WOMEN

(Minimum 50 made)

1. Cathy Owen (1985) 57-60	.950
2. Cathy Owen (1984) 54-61	.885
3. Amy Stephens (1988)	
52-60	.867
4. Amy Stephens (1989)	
75-88	.852
5. Sarah Muller (1990) 71-84	.845
6. Angie Miller (1986)	
102-122	.836
7. Meggan Yedsena (1994)	
73-88	.830
8. Kiera Hardy (2007) 89-108	.824
9. Anna DeForge (1996)	
73-89	.820
9. Tina McClain (1996) 73-89	.820

CAREER FREE THROW PERCENTAGE, MEN

(Minimum 200 attempts)

1. Jack Moore (1979-82)	
446-495	.901
2. Tom Baack (1966-68)	
247-297	.832
3. Brian Carr (1984-87)	
230-287	.801
4. Nate Johnson (2003-04)	
186-233	.798
5. Bob Gratopp (1968-70)	
316-400	.790
5. Jamar Johnson (1992-94)	
166-210	.790

CAREER FREE THROW PERCENTAGE, WOMEN

(Minimum 100 made)

1. Cathy Owen (1982-85)	
204-232	.879
2. Amy Stephens (1986-89)	
215-257	.837
3. Kiera Hardy (2004-07)	
279-344	.811
4. Angie Miller (1984-87)	
335-421	.796
5. Alexa Johnson (2001-04)	
218-274	.776

Best Fits for

***Cook says
shorter outside
hitters bring
all-around skills***

By Bob Hamar

When John Cook unveiled his 2008 recruiting class, one fact stood out. The Huskers have relied on the big 6-foot-2 or 6-3 outside hitters the past few years. They will have Jordan Larson coming back next year for her senior season, but the outside hitters coming in won't be that tall.

Jordan Haverly, a 6-1 outside hitter from Cherry Hill, Ill., was rated the 20th-best senior by Prepvolleyball.com. Kaitlynn James, a 5-11 outside hitter from Louisville, Ken., was rated the 13th-best senior by Prepvolleyball.com.

"They are not as big as we are used to having, but there are several ways to win in volleyball," Cook said. "Obviously everybody would like to have 6-2, 6-3 outside hitters who can play all the way around. But we felt these were the best fits for our program, and that's how we approached this recruiting class."

Cook said Haverly and James are similar to sophomore-to-be Tara Mueller, who is just 5-11 but has outstanding all-around skills. Having smaller outside hitters means there may be some changes in how the Huskers play in coming years.

"It means potentially we might play a little bit of a faster tempo,"

2008 RECRUITING CLASS

JORDAN HAVERLY		ALLISON MCNEAL	
6-1 Outside Hitter Cherry Hill, Ill.		6-2 Middle Blocker Schulenburg, Texas	
KAITLYNN JAMES		SYDNEY ANDERSON	
5-11 Outside Hitter Louisville, Ky.		6-0 Setter Salt Lake City, Utah	

Cook said "It can mean we're going to have to become even more of a defensive team when you're not blocking as many balls. These guys have to be really highly skilled. When you're that size, and the same with Tara Mueller, they're not going to overpower everybody every night. They're going to have to be smart, skillful players."

Cook and the Huskers saw examples of that when they traveled to China in the summer of 2006. Players tend to be not as tall in Asia, but are very skillful on the volleyball court.

"You look internationally, there are certain countries that have really tall players and certain countries that have really small players," Cook said. "Typically, the Asian countries are very successful. They rely on high skill, great passing, defense and ball control. With these types of players, you have to be really good at those skills."

Haverly and James make up just half of Nebraska's scholarship players coming in next year. Cook also signed Allison McNeal, a 6-2 middle blocker from Schulenburg, Texas, who was

or Program

rated as the fourth-best senior by Prepvolleyball.com, and Sydney Anderson, a 6-foot setter from Salt Lake City, Utah, who played her freshman year at Utah before spending time with the USA National program.

Cook said McNeal is more of a typical Nebraska recruit. She is from a small town in Texas, but has family ties in Iowa. She is also a state high jump champion as well.

McNeal was a starting middle blocker this summer on the USA Youth Team that played in the Junior Youth World Championships.

"What we saw a couple of years ago, the talent and potential she had really blossomed this summer when she finally got with some good players and a good team and a good training situation," Cook said. "She got to train for a month with that team. Before that, she was on a typical small-town high school team on a very small club program. She had no high-level experience until last summer. We think she has a chance to be a great player in this program."

Anderson will come to Nebraska with three years of college eligibility remaining. As a freshman at Utah, she averaged 12.45 assists, 2.77 digs and 0.76 blocks to lead the Utes to a 28-4 record and into the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

Cook said Anderson's college experience and time spent with the USA National Team will be valuable for the Huskers.

"Even though she doesn't have four years of eligibility left, she has three years," Cook said. "It's not ideal for what you want, but it works out better than having two people in the same class who are going to graduate at the same time."

Cook said he might have considered running a 6-2 next fall, but with

Rachel Holloway's surprise announcement that she would not return, the 6-2 offense probably won't be an option.

Holloway said in early January that she would enroll at the University of Alabama to be closer to her family and was not planning to play volleyball.

That will make Anderson and Brigette Root, a walk-on freshman from Grand Island, the only two set-



Rachel Holloway has left the team.

ters next fall. With Holloway gone, Anderson becomes a very important recruit for Cook and the Huskers.

Despite the loss of four All-Americans, the expectations for the Husker program won't change. Cook and his players expect to contend for the national championship every year.

"One thing I really like about this group is there are some high expectations that have been set for this program," Cook said. "I think they're embracing the expectations, the traditions and the success that we've had and continuing on with that." ■

Bob Hamar covers the Nebraska volleyball team for the Grand Island (Neb.) Independent. He can be reached at bob.hamar@theindependent.com

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TRACK AND FIELD

Ready to Fly

Long jumper set to put pressure aside and focus on his goals

By KATELYN KERKHOVE

Robert Rands understands pressure. It happens in those moments right before a jump, or when he's sprinting down the runway, considering every movement he has to make.

Rands is still trying to beat his high school long jump mark of 25 feet, 1 3/4 inches. He's gotten close several times, hitting 24-9 1/4 and 24-10 1/2, but he's still craving those extra inches.

For the Bellevue, Neb., native, the challenge has been unwelcome.

He's no longer the center of attention at track meets. People aren't huddling around the pit to see how far he will throw his body.

It's tough.

But Rands is growing up, accepting his setbacks and pushing through.

Now a junior on the Nebraska track and field team, Rands is looking to leave a mark farther than 25 feet, and he feels like this year could be his



Nebraska's Robert Rands placed fourth in the long jump in the 2007 Big 12 Indoor Championships with a season-best of 24-10 1/2. He competed indoors in the triple jump for the first time with a personal-best of 46-2 3/4 at the Big 12 meet.

first real shot to do that.

"Me coming from Nebraska and going to school here — a lot of people looked up to me and have been following me since I've been in college," Rands said. "I've put pressure on myself and, for me, that's not good. I've been doing it too much.

"I want to do better than in high school, and it's been hard. Hopefully, this year I can turn all that around and relax and do what I have to do to make my goals."

As a senior at Bellevue East High School, Rands broke the oldest Nebraska high school state meet record by winning the 2005 all-class long jump gold medal with a jump of 24-11 1/4. He also became the first male long jumper to win three consecutive gold medals at the state meet.

Rands said he owes much of his success to his high school long jump coach Deidre McKinley. While Rands had jumped 19-2 as an eighth-grader, it hadn't been pretty, and McKinley was the first to show him the technique.

"I just wanted to start playing every sport I could do," Rands said of middle school. "In track, I had no idea

what to do. They just told me to run and jump, so I did. But in high school, I was very fortunate to have a very good coach. She went to the Olympic trials."

Following his illustrious prep career, Rands looked to continue in both football and track when entering college. Coming to Nebraska on a football scholarship, he stepped away from the runway for a few months and onto the turf as a defensive back. Constantly told to put on weight, Rands said he saw his long jump body begin to change in a bad way.

"I knew I was behind already, and that's why I chose not to go to the bowl game and get all the gifts and stuff. It just wasn't worth it," Rands said. "It was important for me to get going on track. I was huge. I was in football shape, not in track shape at all."

Working on his speed, technique and losing weight, Rands gave up football for good to focus on track.

Since then, Nebraska coach Gary Pepin said Rands has matured as a person and as an athlete, which will help him as the year goes on.

Pepin said Rands is finally putting

the additional pressures of fans, friends and family aside and focusing on his event and his goals.

Technically speaking, it's the consistency of his approach that needs work, but if that can be put in place, Pepin said Rands has the athleticism to fly.

"Last year his consistency and accuracy was poor, so there was a lot of meets that his mark was not really how far he was actually jumping," Pepin said. "It wasn't a matter of athletic ability; it was other factors."

Yet, with the technical issues, Rands was still able to grab some honors. He won two long jump competitions, the Big 12 Conference-Mountain West Challenge and the Prairie Wolf Invitational. He also placed fourth in the Big 12 Indoor Championships with a mark of 24-10 1/2, which earned him second-team all-conference accolades.

"I think that he can jump certainly farther than he jumped in high school," Pepin said. "How much farther? That's really hard to tell. The thing I'm more concerned about is consistency. I want to see indoors, a meet no less than high-23 marks." ■



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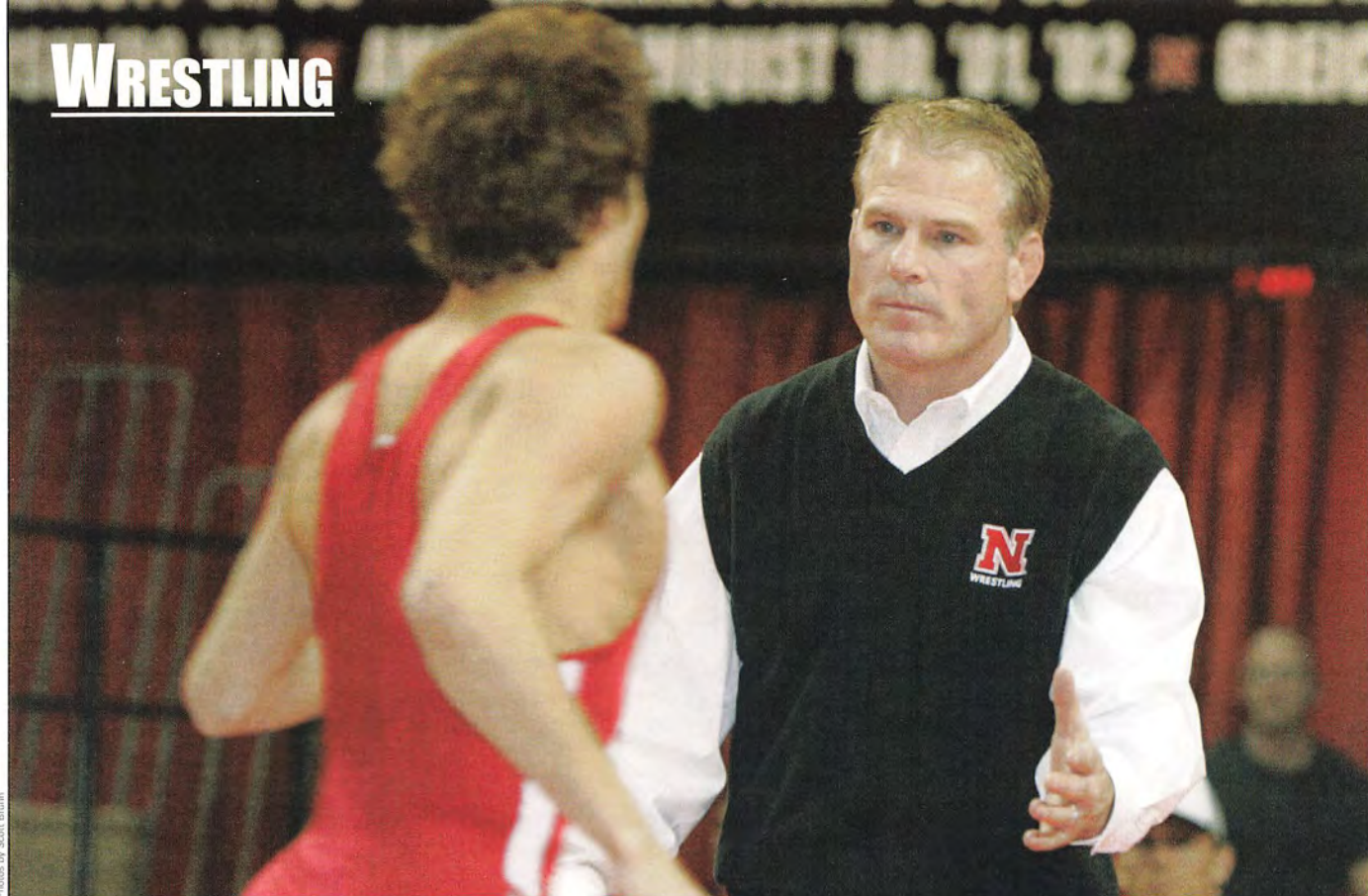


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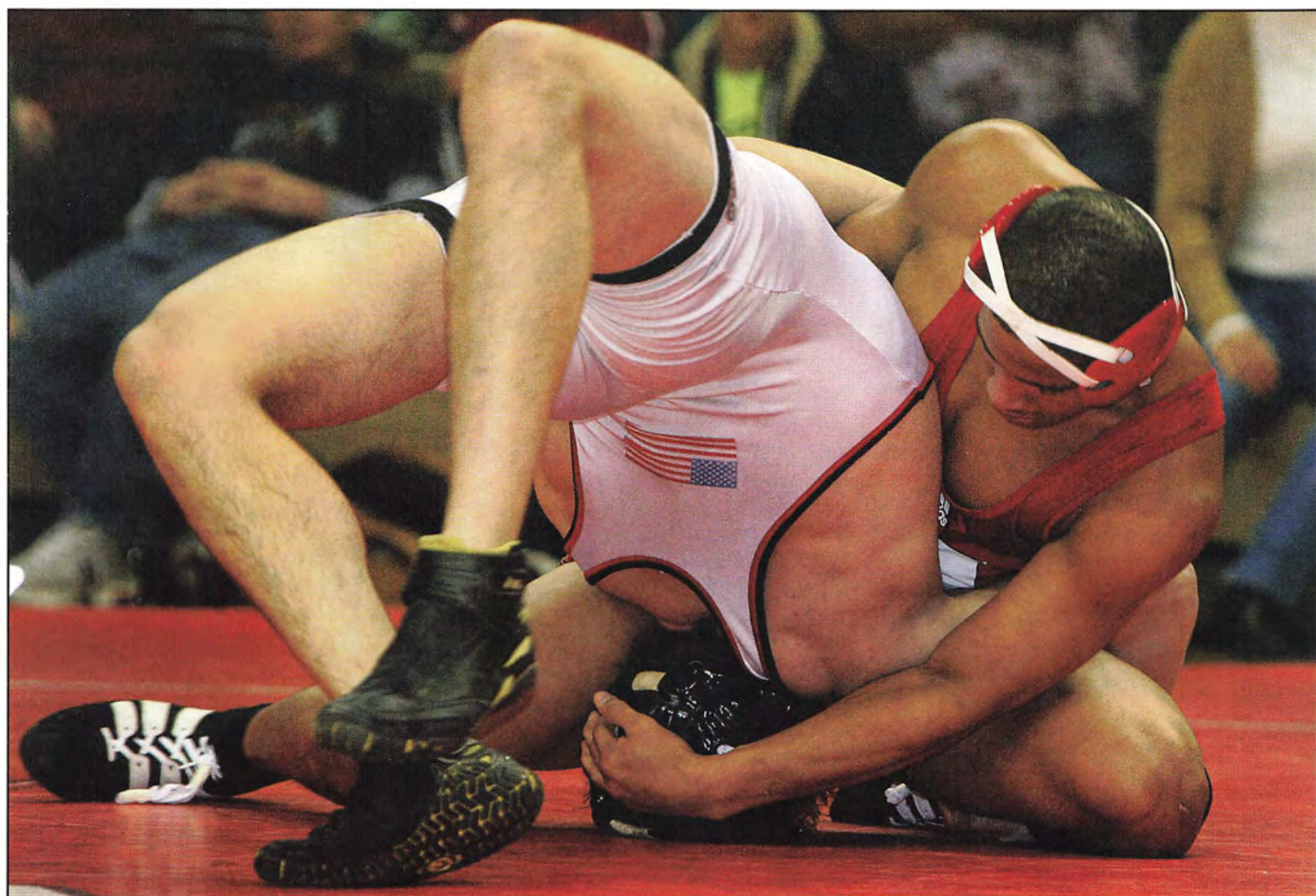
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WRESTLING

Photos by Scott Bruhn



Nebraska coach Mark Manning congratulates No. 1-ranked Paul Donahoe, the defending national champion at 125 pounds, after a victory earlier this season. Manning collected his 100th dual win at NU as the Huskers rolled to a 38-6 dual victory over Northern Colorado Jan. 2 in Greeley, Colo.



Nebraska 184-pound wrestler Vince Jones (right) gets set to pin Dana's Jon Wilbourne in a 40-6 NU victory in mid-December.

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Indoor Season Opens

The Nebraska track and field team is slated to open the indoor season with the Holiday Inn Invitational at the Bob Devaney Sports Center on Jan. 18-19.

Pole vaulters Zac Holoch, Pat Burke, Natalie Willer and Lindsey Maher got a head start on the rest of the team, competing at the National Pole Vault Summit at Reno, Nev., Jan. 4-5.

Holoch and Burke competed in the men's Division 2 of college vaulters, finishing fifth (15-11) and sixth (15-41/4), respectively, while Willer, a freshman, finished fourth (12-9 1/2) in the women's Division 1 of college vaulters and Maher finished sixth (11-113/4) in the women's Division 2.

Burke, a senior, is among the Cornhuskers' six captains. Senior Dusty Jonas and junior Skyler Reising are the other men's captains. Senior Kayla Wilkinson and Kim Shubert and sophomore Leandra McGruder are the women's captains. Wilkinson missed the 2007 season because of injury.

Jonas, who has earned six All-America awards, finished second in the high jump at the NCAA Indoor Championships last season. Wilkinson earned All-America recognition in 2006, finishing second in the javelin at the NCAA meet. She is one of two returning All-Americans on the women's team. Epley Bullock is the other. Scott Wims, Dan Christensen and Lukas Hulett are All-Americans on the men's team.

MEN'S ROSTER

Freshmen: David Adams (distance), Robert Babcock (pole vault), Anthony Blue (sprints), Derrell Bradford (jumps), Austin Braman (throws), Matthew Conahan (distance), Adam Dailey (hurdles), Brad Doering (distance), Scott Evans (hurdles), Peter Falcon (distance), Lehann Fourie (hurdles), Luke Franssen (pole vault), Matthew Giesselmann (throws), Brett Gooden (distance), Nicholas Gordon (jumps), Todd Gulizia (distance), Paul Hamilton (jumps), Tyler Hitchler (throws), Trey Jordan (throws), Scott Jorgenson (jumps), Tariq Lee (sprints), Kellen McClure (jumps), Anthony Oberle (distance), Mauro Parnell (jumps), Tim Pieper (pole vault), Logan Reising (multi-event), Blaise Rewaka (distance), Jamelle Ross (hurdles), Matthew Schilling (distance), Sam Siegel (throws), Eric Thies (distance), Mikel Thomas (distance), Tyler Throener (hurdles), Carter Wasem (throws).

Sophomores: Chris Brown (throws), Seth Burney (pole vault), Kyle Custer (distance), Dax Dannels (sprints), Samuel Haase (jumps), Lukas Hulett (sprints), James Laville (distance), Ethan Luebbe (distance), Eric Lund (hurdles), Nicholas Makukutu (hurdles), Chris Nuttelman (jumps), Samuel Ogden (pole vault), John Ottun



Pat Burke



Kayla Wilkinson



Dusty Jonas



Kim Shubert



Skyler Reising



Leandra McGruder

(jumps), Brian Parr (distance), Eric Petersen (throws), Ryan Petrocchi (throws), Matthew Ramm (throws), Tyrell Ross (hurdles), Jamie Ryder (hurdles), Erwin Schmidt (middle distance), David Schutter (throws), Brandon Sheppard (jumps), Cyland Simmons (hurdles), Bryce Somer (distance), Matt Trostel (jumps), Scott Wims (sprints).

Juniors: Dan Christensen (sprints), Zac Holoch (pole vault), Jack Lemke (middle distance), Andrew Lind (distance), Robert Rands (jumps).

Seniors: Bryan Bell (throws), Aaron Bozarth (throws), Patrick Burke (multi-event), Jared Gilmore (hurdles), Dusty Jonas (jumps), Keith Lloyd (throws), Alec Madaua (distance), Thorin Meyer (javelin), Andrew Pearson (hurdles), Ben Schutter (multi-event), Vince Sickler (distance), Kirkland Thornton (hurdles), Peter van der Westhuizen (distance), LeRon Williams (jumps).

WOMEN'S ROSTER

Freshmen: Destiny Brown (jumps), Breanna Bussel (pole vault), Rachel Butler

(multi-event), Lara Crofford (distance), Arna Erega (hurdles), Amanda Foster (pole vault), Jade Hodson (throws), Camela Jiskra (pole vault), Kathryn Kelly (distance), Lynsey Kreikemeier (distance), Karyn LaCour (hurdles), Ashley Miller (distance), Celeste Pankonin (jumps), Rebecca Rahmann (throws), Deidra Rogers (sprints), Audrey Svane (jumps), Kayla Ubel (distance), Jennifer Webers (distance), Natalie Willer (pole vault), Victoria Zimmerman (throws).

Sophomores: Epley Bullock (jumps), Beth Christensen (throws), Nikita Eades (hurdles), Erin Hannon (jumps), Amanda Latsch (throws), Lindsay Maher (pole vault), Elizabeth Marsh (distance), Leandra McGruder (jumps), Chantae McMillan (jumps), Lisa Minnick (throws), Samantha Musil (throws), Danielle Smith (jumps), Alyssa Vierregger (sprints), Megan Wheatley (multi-event).

Juniors: Rachel Carrizales (distance), Joslyn Dalton (distance), Ari Goldstein (distance), Chi Kalu (sprints), Janae Mueller (middle distance), Jennifer Pancoast (distance), Kacie Sharp (throws), Zarinah Suluki-Drakes (jumps), Natalja Zarcenko (distance).

Seniors: Channing Anseth (distance), Betsy Miller (distance), Sheryl Morgan (hurdles), Kim Shubert (multi-event), Tamara Solari (throws), Kayla Wilkinson (throws).

SCHEDULE

Jan. 18-19 — Holiday Inn Invitational; **26** — Conference Challenge & Nebraska Wesleyan Invitational at Bob Devaney Sports Center.

Feb. 1-2 — Frank Sevigne Husker Invitational; **8-9** — adidas Classic; **15-16** — Iowa State Classic at Ames, Iowa, Tyson Invitational at Fayetteville, Ark.; **22** — Prairie Wolf Invitational at BDSC.

Feb. 29-March 1 — Big 12 Indoor Championships at BDSC.

March 7-8 — Iowa State Last Chance Meet at Ames, Iowa; **14-15** — NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships at Fayetteville, Ark.

April 4-5 — Jim Click Shootout at Tucson Ariz., Stanford Invitational at Palo Alto, Calif., Emporia State Relays at Emporia, Kan.; **10-11** — Audrey Walton Multis at Columbia, Mo., John Jacobs Invitational at Norman, Okla.; **17-20** — Kansas Relays at Lawrence, Kan., Mt. SAC Relays at Walnut, Calif., Doane Relays at Crete, Neb.; **23-26** — Penn Relays at Philadelphia, Drake Relays at Des Moines, Iowa; **27** — Nebraska Open at Ed Weir Stadium.

May 3 — Ward Haylett Invitational at Manhattan, Kan.; **10** — Nebraska Invitational; **16-18** — Big 12 Outdoor Championships at Boulder, Colo.; **30-31** — NCAA Midwest Regional at Ed Weir Stadium.

June 11-14 — NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships at Des Moines, Iowa; **25-26** — U.S. Olympic Trials at Eugene, Ore.

QUICK HITS

AS GOOD AS IT GETS

Nebraska has never had a more honored student-athlete than Sarah Pavan. The senior from Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, was named an NCAA Today's Top VIII award-winner in mid-December, becoming the 16th Cornhusker to earn such recognition. That total leads the nation.

Pavan was to receive the award at the NCAA Convention in Nashville in mid-January.

Top VIII honorees are selected by the NCAA Honors Committee, which includes eight athletics administrators at member institutions as well as former student-athletes.

Other former Husker volleyball players who have won the award are: Nancy Metcalf (2002), Janet Kruse (1992) and Virginia Stahr (1990). Only eight other volleyball players have ever won the award, which was first presented in 1973. Pavan was the lone volleyball player to receive it this year.

"When I came on my visit, they showed me the list of the past Top VIII winners, and I was amazed," Pavan said. "I saw it and said, 'To be one of those you must have to do something great.'"

During her four years at Nebraska, "I began to understand how elite that group is," she said.

Nebraska's other Top VIII award winners have included: Randy Schleusener (football, 1981), Dave Rimington (football, 1983), Mark Traynowicz (football, 1985), Tom Schlesinger (men's gymnastics, 1989), Jake Young (football, 1990), Pat Tyrance (football, 1991), Patrick Kirksey (men's gymnastics, 1991), Rob Zatechka (football, 1994), Trev Alberts (football, 1994), Aaron Graham (football, 1996), Grant Wistrom (football, 1998) and Richelle Simpson (women's gymnastics, 2005).

The other Top VIII award winners for 2008 are: Rachel Buehler (Stanford, soccer), Roberto Castro (Georgia Tech, golf), Dennis Dixon (Oregon, football), Ben Wildman-Tobriner (Stanford, swimming), Lisa Winkle (Calvin College, basketball, outdoor track), Jamie Wolf (Clarion University of Pennsylvania, diving) and Sarah Zerzan (Willamette University, cross country, outdoor track).

"To be selected among the top student-athletes in the country is the ultimate honor, and it shows the commitment that the University of Nebraska has for its student-athletes to succeed both academically and athletically," said coach John Cook. "This is a proud moment for the Husker Nation."

It also is a "great reflection on our program," he said.

MORE PAVAN, AND OTHERS

Less than a week before being named a Top VIII award winner, Pavan was named an AVCA first-team All-American for a fourth consecutive season. Only three other volleyball players have been so honored, all from Stanford: Bev Ogden (1989-92), Kerri Walsh (1996-99) and Logan Tom (1999-02).

Huskers Rachel Holloway, Christina Houghtelling, a first-team selection in 2005, and Tracy Stalls were named to the All-America second team while Jordan Larson, a first-team selection last season, was named to the third team. Houghtelling and Stalls are seniors. Larson is a junior, and Holloway is a sophomore. The five this season are the most-ever for Nebraska, which leads the nation with 62 all time.

In addition to Pavan, the first team included: Foluke Akinradewo (Stanford, MB), Cynthia Barboza (Stanford, OH), Juliann Faucette (Texas, OH), Nicole Fawcett (Penn State, OH), Christa Hammotto (Penn State, MB), Megan Hodge (Penn State, OH), Asia Kaczor (USC, RS/Opp.) Bryn Kehoe (Stanford, S), Christal Morrison (Washington, OH), Angie Pressey (California, OH) and Nellie Spicer (UCLA, S).



Sarah Pavan

STILL MORE PAVAN, AND OTHERS

Pavan, Houghtelling and Stalls were named first-team Academic All-Americans this season, the first time in school history that three Huskers were so honored. The honor was Pavan's third, and she repeated as ESPN The Magazine's Academic All-American of the Year.

Pavan has a 4.00 cumulative grade-point average with a biochemistry major. Houghtelling, along with Pavan among five Huskers who have been two-time first-team Academic All-Americans, has a 3.91 GPA with an elementary education major, and Stalls, a two-year captain, has a 3.95 GPA in an individualized program of students. The team GPA is 3.60, which "says a lot about the type of individuals in this program," said senior associate athletic director Dennis Leblanc.

Nebraska's only other three-time, first-team Academic All-American was Virginia Stahr (1987-89).

WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS

The Husker women's gymnastics team was scheduled to open its season at Iowa State on Jan. 11 and then play host to Arizona State in a dual at the Devaney Sports Center two days later.

Senior Emily Parsons finished with the top all-around score (39.10) in the annual intrasquad meet at Mabel Lee Hall in mid-December. Sophomore Maria Scaffidi was second (38.90).

The roster: Erin Davis, Fr. (Round Rock, Texas), Brittnee Habbib, Fr. (North York, Ontario), Kathryn Howard, So. (Houston, Texas), Sabrina Long, So. (Tulsa, Okla.), Vanessa Meloche, Jr. (Montreal Quebec), Molly Ohnoutka, Rfr. (Omaha), Parsons, Sr. (St. Charles, Mo.), Scaffidi, So. (Hartland, Wis.), Stephanie Seich, Fr. (South Amboy, N.J.), Desire' Sniatynski, Sr. (Kenosha, Wis.), Kylie Stone, Jr. (Calgary, Alberta), Brittney Williams, Sr. (Hatboro, Pa.), Tricia Woo, Jr. (Milpitas, Calif.).

The remaining schedule: Jan. 18 — Utah at Salt Lake City, Utah; Jan. 25 — Missouri; Feb. 1 — at Oklahoma; Feb. 7 — Michigan; Feb. 23 — Denver; Feb. 29 — at Kentucky; March 7 — Stanford & Alabama at Palo Alto, Calif.; March 14 — Iowa State; March 21 — Penn State, Maryland, Rutgers at State College, Pa.; March 29 — Big 12 Championships at Norman, Okla.; April 12 — NCAA Regionals at campus sites; April 24-26 — NCAA Championships at Athens, Ga.



Emily Parsons

MEN'S GYMNASTICS

The Husker men's gymnastics team also was scheduled to open the season on Jan. 11 at the Rocky Mountain Open in Colorado Springs, Colo. The two-day competition was to include No. 3-ranked Oklahoma, Arizona State and the Air Force Academy.

The NCAA recently adopted an international Olympic scoring system in judging collegiate men's gymnastics. Instead of a "10" being perfect, there will be no cap on scores.

The roster: Sam Auge, Fr. (Mahtomedi, Minn.), Cory Baumgarten, Fr. (Plano, Texas), Bo Benak, Jr. (Omaha), Daniel Brulé, So. (Atlanta, Ga.), Eric Daigle, Jr. (Omaha), Bear Danley, Fr. (Buffalo Grove, Ill.), Garret Durst, So. (Lincoln, Neb.), Matthew Forrest, Fr. (Olathe, Kan.), Adrien Hernandez, So. (Round Rock, Texas), Anthony Ingrelli, Fr. (West Allis, Ill.), Jacob Ives, Jr. (Houston, Texas), Anthony Maras, So. (Ramsey, Minn.), James Mauldin, Jr. (Racine, Wis.), John Robinson, So. (Charlotte, N.C.), Josh Rusler, So. (Norman, Okla.), T.J. Schmidt, Jr. (Blair, Neb.), Erich Schmitz, Fr. (Lake Forest, Ill.), Kyle Shanahan, So. (Monument, Colo.), David Spidowski, Fr. (Savannah, Ga.), Stephen Tétrault, Sr. (Lincoln, Neb.), Stefan Wallof, So. (Rowlett, Texas).

The remaining schedule: Jan. 20 — Air Force, Oklahoma; Jan. 26 — Stanford Open at Palo Alto, Calif.; Feb. 1 — at Oklahoma; Feb. 7-9 — Winter Cup at Las Vegas, Nev.; Feb. 16 — at Stanford; March 1 — at Minnesota; March 14 — Iowa; March 22 — Air Force; April 4-5 — MPSF Tournament in Lincoln; April 17 — NCAA Championships at Palo Alto, Calif. ■

CROSSWORD

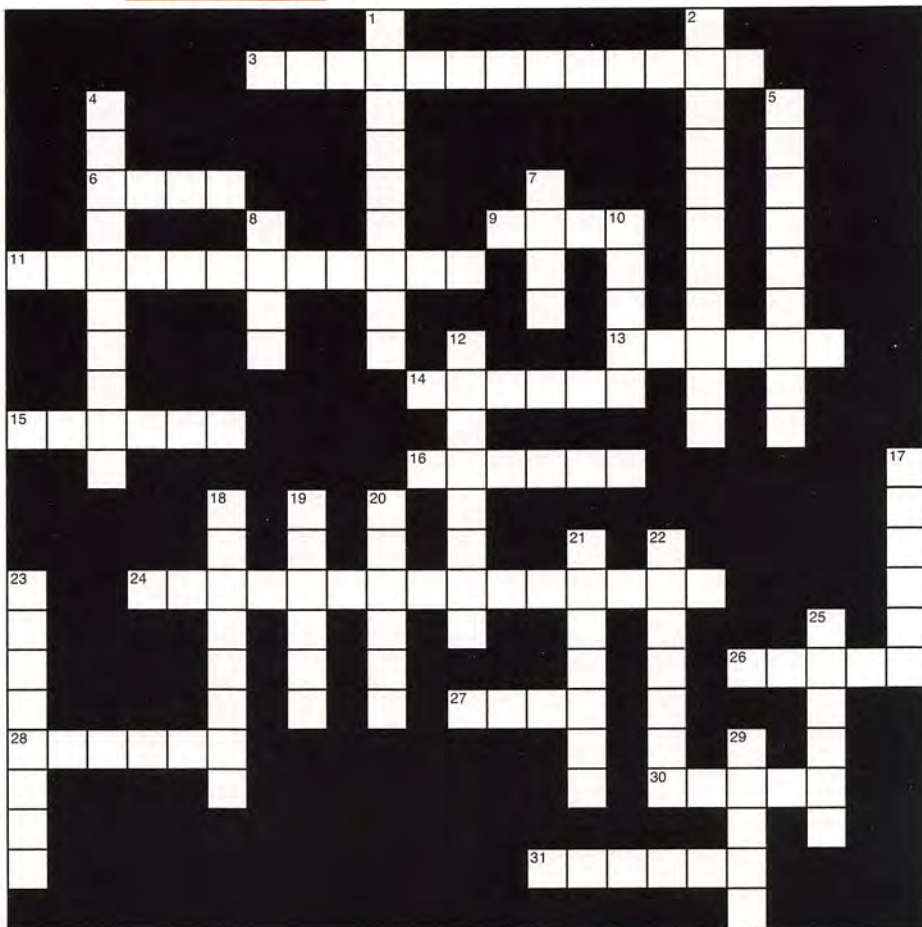
ACROSS

- 3 Opponent in Bo Pelini's game as interim coach
- 6 Ex-Husker linebacker now with Tampa Bay
- 9 Bo's older brother
- 11 Sept. 6 opponent
- 13 Passed for 14 touchdowns in 2007
- 14 Bo Pelini's college position
- 15 Associate AD for football
- 16 Had 9 receiving touchdowns in 2007
- 24 Aug. 30 opponent
- 26 Tight ends coach
- 27 Frank Solich's school
- 28 Junior college tight end recruit
- 30 New quarterback recruit
- 31 Defensive line coach

DOWN

- 1 Bo Pelini's alma mater
- 2 Offensive line recruit from Lincoln
- 4 April 19 event
- 5 Ex-Husker lineman now with New England
- 7 Passed for 16 touchdowns in 2007
- 8 Running backs coach
- 10 Had 9 rushing touchdowns in 2007
- 12 Defensive ends coach
- 17 Quarterbacks coach
- 18 Cotton Bowl winner
- 19 Linebackers coach
- 20 Orange Bowl winner
- 21 Wide receivers coach
- 22 Secondary coach
- 23 Big 12 champion
- 25 Offensive line coach
- 29 Basketball leading scorer

Answers in March issue



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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

'Easily the Star of the Game'

Editor's note: In recognition of Black History Month (February), Huskers Illustrated takes a look back at Wilbur Wood, a Nebraska basketball letterman in 1908-1910.

The Nebraska basketball team struggled down the stretch in the 1909-10 season. After winning six in a row, following a 0-3 start, coach T.J. Hewiat's Cornhuskers lost their final seven games. Despite the losing streak, Wilbur Wood distinguished himself. Consider the following newspaper accounts.

Minnesota 27, Nebraska 9 at Minneapolis: "Wood for Nebraska played a spectacular game, oftentimes dribbling the ball down the floor and around the Minnesota team. Towards the end of the game the crowd began cheering every time Wood secured the ball and started to dribble."

Kansas 40, Nebraska 20 in Lincoln: Wood "was easily the star of the game. He stuck to (Tommy) Johnson of Kansas with a persistence that kept that Kansan on the run. Johnson could not get away . . . and time and time again his attempts at passing the ball were blocked. Wood was not satisfied with merely taking care of Johnson but . . . fought with others of the Jayhawkers for possession of the ball. He did not, however, have an opportunity to dribble the ball down the field as he has in other games."

Kansas 40, Nebraska 13 in Lincoln: "As on Friday, Wood was the star of the game."

In the second Kansas game, according to the account,

Johnson became so frustrated with Wood's defense that he fouled out, after scoring only two goals — a total Wood equaled.

Wood, who earned three letters in basketball, was a graduate student in 1910, enrolled in the College of Pharmacy after earning a degree in the College of Literature.

The teams on which he played all had losing records, in a game that often seemed like football played indoors because of the roughness. But his career was significant because he was black, at a time when few blacks competed in any sports at predominantly white universities.

Blacks were more likely to play football than basketball at the time, according to A Hard Road to Glory, the definitive history of African-American athletes compiled by the late Arthur Ashe Jr. Ashe identifies Wood among a half-dozen blacks who played basketball at predominantly white universities prior to World War I.

Nebraska's first black athlete was George Flippin, who played on the football team from 1891 to 1894. Bill Johnson and Robert Taylor played football at the turn of the century. And Clint Ross was an outstanding lineman on Jumbo Stiehm's undefeated and untied football team in 1913.

But Ross would be Nebraska's last black letterman for nearly 50 years. By 1917, the university prohibited blacks from participating in extracurricular activities — and from enrolling in graduate school. ■



Wilbur Wood

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Staying The Course

'You just have to do what you do, and eventually you get better'



**Mike
BABCOCK**

THE PRACTICE was early in the spring of 2004, and a player made a mistake. Bo Pelini, Nebraska's defensive coordinator of a couple of months, looked on as an assistant coach berated the player.

Pelini recounted the incident during a high school coaches' convention in Louisiana last spring.

The coach yelled non-stop as the player ran back to the huddle, according to Pelini. "I can't believe you did that. How stupid was that?" he screamed, or words to that effect. "You know better."

The coach "was going on, just ranting and raving," Pelini told his audience. "I pulled him over, and I said, 'All that stuff, was that for you or for him?' He (the coach) just kind of looked at me."

Not once had the coach told the player what he had done wrong, said Pelini. "I told him, 'The next time it's on you, not on him (the player).' It's about getting kids to understand what they're going to do."

Despite his passion, Pelini doesn't believe in brow-beating players. Not that he isn't demanding. Nebraska's new head coach definitely is. But his criticism is never personal.

And if he does get after a player during practice, he said, later he'll be sure to "walk up and put my arm around him and say, 'You're better than that. You're better than that, right?'"

He emphasizes the positive, so players buy into his philosophy. Besides, "there hasn't been a player ever that has tried to go out on the field and make a mistake," Pelini told the coaches.

"If he made a mistake, he made it for a reason. As a coach you need to search for that reason, search for a way to get through to that kid. Ultimately, when you coach that way, the players are going to believe in you. And at the end of the day, they're going to want to run through a wall for you. I believe that."

If you want to hear more of what Pelini believes, you can do so at www.fastandfuriousfootball.com where his presentation to the Louisiana high school coaches is archived.

Pelini speaks and answers questions for more than an hour. Much of what he says is technical and defense-specific. But some of it applies to coaching in general, just dealing with people.

If you listen even for a few minutes, you're going to come away further assured that athletic director Tom Osborne picked the right guy to get the program turned around. And you're also going to come away convinced that Pelini is a teacher, with educationally sound principles.

"When I came to LSU, the first thing we talked about was, what do we want to be about, this defense? We decided that the

No. 1 thing we were going to do, we were going to be the best-effort defense in the country," Pelini told the coaches. "I said as long as I'm at LSU, I want teams, when they put on our tape, to sit there and say, 'Wow, how do they get their guys to play that hard?'"

"To me, it's a cultural thing. That's what we talked about with our guys."

In order to communicate with players, coaches have to understand them.

"That's our philosophy, spending time with our players both on the football side of things and outside of football, so you know what works with them, what makes them tick," he said.

"I believe that's a very, very important part of coaching."

Another important part of coaching is consistency, staying the course.

In Pelini's first game at LSU, Arizona State gained 560 yards against his defense, with Sam Keller, then the Sun Devils' quarterback, completing 35-of-56 passes for 461 yards and four touchdowns without an interception. And the Tigers managed to sack him only once.

"Everybody in the state was ready to hang Bo Pelini. You guys were probably right along with them, but everybody wanted to hang me," Pelini told the high school coaches.

"We made some adjustments, just like everybody else would. But we never really went off our original philosophy, what we do. The easiest thing to do right then would be to just make wholesale changes, but I've been around the game long enough to know that's now how you go about things."

"You just have to do what you do, and eventually you get better."

LSU finished that season ranked third nationally in total defense and scoring defense. The Tigers ranked third nationally in total defense in Pelini's second season. And they ranked third nationally in total defense this season, on the way to winning the BCS national championship.

The national title game victory against Ohio State illustrated his stay-with-it philosophy. The Buckeyes made big plays early and took a 10-0 lead. But the LSU defense settled down and created problems for quarterback Todd Boeckman, whom the Tigers sacked five times.

"Disrupt the rhythm of the offense," Pelini told the high school coaches.

And don't berate your players. "I never want to hear one of our coaches say, 'You're a dumb-ass.' Because if you say it long enough, they're going to believe it," he said.

"We don't coach that way." ■



Bo Pelini's LSU defenses ranked third nationally each of the last 3 years.

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for nearly 30 years. Mike can be reached at MBABCOCK1@neb.rr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.



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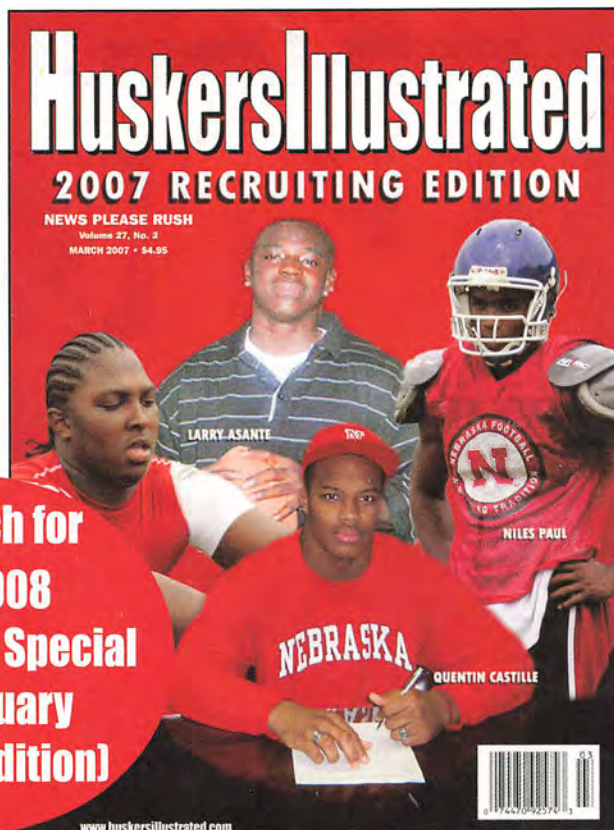
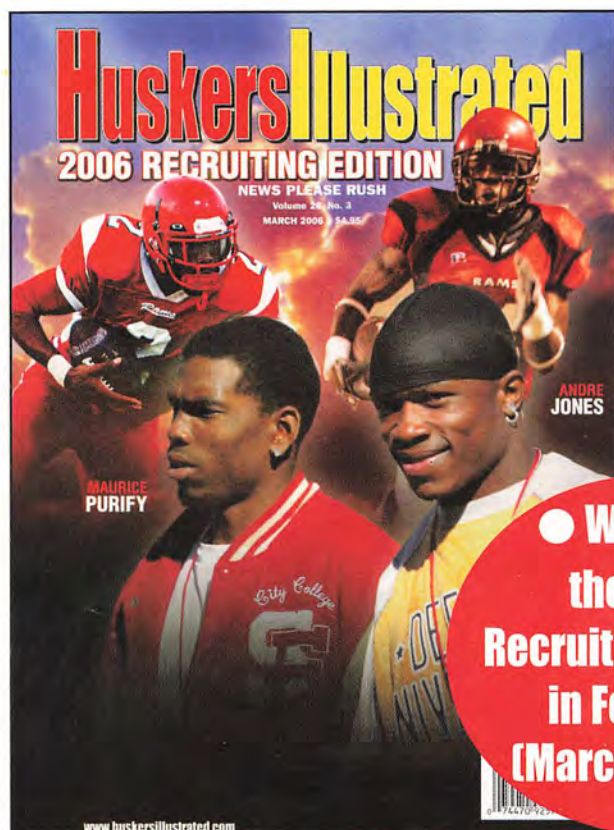
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